



PHD

Life leadership: crafting a personal account of learning to lead my life well

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**LIFE LEADERSHIP
CRAFTING A PERSONAL ACCOUNT
OF
LEARNING TO LEAD MY LIFE WELL**

**Submitted by Robin Ladkin
For the degree of PhD
Of the University of Bath
2002**

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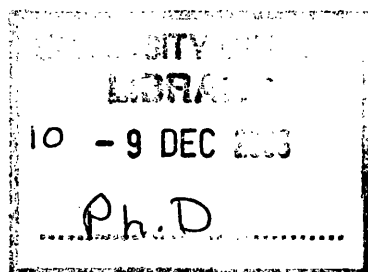
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Acknowledgements for permission to re-produce Images and Music.

I am grateful to the Tate Gallery of London for permission to copy in my thesis in hard copy form for the purposes of research:-

JMW Turner:	Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory), the Morning after the Deluge. Sunrise with a Boat between Headlands Sunrise, a Castle on a Bay: "Solitude".
William Blake:	Newton
Samuel Palmer:	The Gleaming Field.
Paul Cezanne:	The Gardener Vannier
Cecil Collins:	The Artist and his Wife (1939).

On the same basis I am grateful to:-

Harry N Abrams, Inc. for Wolf Kahn: Portrait of the Artist, 1954

Art Institute of Chicago for Odilon Redon, Guardian Spirit of the Waters, 1878.

Munch Museum, Kampen, Norway for Edvard Munch, The Sick Child 1885-86.

I am also grateful to the following for permission to include musical extracts on the accompanying cd, again for research purposes only and to be retained with library copies.

Track:

1. Enlightenment by Van Morrison

on the cd Enlightenment by Van Morrison. Produced by Van Morrison for Caledonia Productions Ltd. On Polydor 1990.

2. The Unanswered Question composed by Charles Ives.

Played by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra with Gilbert Kalish on piano.
On Deutsche Grammophon, 1994.

3. Szene am Bach composed by Beethoven

2nd movement of Symphony No. 6 in F major, "Pastoral"
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Herbert Von Karajan.
On Deutsche Grammophon, 1984.

4 Ghost Trio composed by Beethoven

2nd. Movement, Largo assai ed espressivo from Piano Trio Op. 70 No. 1
with Daniel Barenboim (piano), Pinchas Zukerman (violin) and Jacqueline du Pre
(cello). On EMI, 1970.

5. bring 'em all in by Mike Scott

on the cd bring 'em all in by Mike Scott on Chrysalis, 1995.

6. "O Mensch! Gib acht!" composed by Mahler

4th movement from Symphony No. 3 in D minor, sung by Jessye Norman with the
Tanglewood Festival Chorus, the American Boychoir and the Boston Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Seiji Ozawa on Philips, 1993.

O man! Take heed!
What does the deep midnight say?
I slept!
I have awakened from a deep dream.
The world is deep,
And deeper than the day remembers.
Deep is its suffering,
Joy deeper yet than heartache!
Suffering speaks: Begone!
All joys want eternity,
Want deep, deep eternity.

("Zarathustra's Midnight Song" by Friedrich Nietzsche.)

7. Sanctus composed by Berlioz.

9th movement of "Grande Messe des Morts" (Requiem) Op. 5
Kenneth Riegel (tenor) with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, the Cleveland
Orchestra conducted by Lorin Maazel, on Decca, 1996..



Odilon Redon

JULY 2 - SEPTEMBER 18, 1994 | THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

prince of dreams

NOW COULD BE THE TIME

***Now could be the time the gods stepped out
from lived-in things
and knocked down all the walls
in my house. New page. Yet the wind
from such page turning would be enough
to throw up air like clods of earth:
a fresh breath-field! O Gods, Gods!
You frequent visitors, sleepers within things,
Who rise in happiness and wash faces and throats
At springs which we can only guess at
And lightly add your restedness to what
Already seems so full: our full lives.
Let it once again be your morning, Gods.
We are repetitions. You alone are source.
The world itself arises with you, and new life gleams
In all the fractured places of our failures***

Rainer Maria Rilke

Translation by Eva Loewe and Noel Cobb

Sphinx IV 1992

**Life Leadership: Crafting an Account of Learning to Lead my Life Well by
Robin Ladkin.**

Abstract.

This thesis is a story of learning. It presents my experience of choosing to become an educator. In the process I have established the basis for my practice through increasing my awareness of my practising self (Who I Am); by consolidating a body of knowledge I call my scholarship (What I Know); and by reflecting on how I relate to my 'students', who are consulting practitioners, and their development (What I Do).

I compare these three forms or aspects of learning to the experiential, propositional and practical knowing in the 'extended epistemology' of Heron and Reason (Heron and Reason 1997). I have created a cyclical, rather than hierarchical, version in which these three forms of knowing revolve in a 'bumpy wheel' around an axis which I identify as 'How I Learn'. I relate this central axis to 'presentational knowing' in the Heron and Reason model, the action of which is central to this thesis.

I have revised my 'story' of learning, which is an account of 'Living Life as Inquiry' (Marshall 1999), reflecting at different levels of what I call 'critical distance'. I suggest that this element of critical distancing is a potential feature of validity in an 'evocative narrative of self' (Richardson 1994), in which writing forms a significant element of 'reflective practice' (Winter et al 1999).

As I have tried to maintain a congruence in the form of my account with my experience of learning through successive revisions, I have noticed my increasing sense of participation in the present. Cycles of 'inner' presentation and 'outer' re-presentation have allowed me to 'hold' or 'suspend' my attachment to outcome in my practice. I relate this sense of dialectic 'suspension' to learning to live in a twofold (Buber 1958) relation to the world.

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PREFACE

1st draft July 2000
2nd draft January 2002
3rd draft April 2002

I want to open my account with a few comments about how it is written.

My hope, in doing so, is that we can establish a relationship which you, as reader, will find satisfying. I feel the need to explain how what you are about to read has been constructed and refined in the expectation that you may, at times, be somewhat frustrated. I rely on Burke's contention that *"form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor (audience, readers) and the adequate satisfying of that appetite. This satisfaction . . . at times involves a temporary set of frustrations, but in the end these frustrations prove to be simply a more involved kind of satisfaction."* (Burke 1968: p. 31 quoted in Winter et al 1999: p. 215)

The form that this account now takes has emerged through a series of writings over the period of my research. It is a kind of holographic record of my inquiry, both its content and its method. Writing, and reflecting through writing, has been a significant aspect of my chosen method of Reflective Practice. And the process of subsequent revisings, to make contact with my imaginary readers, has added cycles of more 'distanced' reflection.

My intention has been to present my account in such a way as to remain faithful to what I see as an important congruence between the 'what' of my learning and the 'how' of my learning.

The difficulty engendered by this multiplicity of purpose has led me to experiment with a number of additional 'commentaries' to the original paper, of which this is now the third. In addition to this Preface the next section – a Dialectic Thou – is intended to introduce you to me and my research in an 'explanatory' voice expressed in the third person as a way of suggesting its 'distancing' quality. I include a Dialectic Thou as an introduction to each chapter as a way of maintaining this explanatory thread.

You will also find, from time to time, that I include commentary in the first person distinguished in blue typeface. These remarks are intended as conversational asides on my process of writing – in effect referring back to these preparatory reflections.

I have tried in this final version of my account to limit these additional commentaries to what I think is necessary to maintain your engagement and understanding. The risk I run is that I end up, the more I try to explain myself, in a repetitive cycle of 'framings.' As Iser has pointed out, I have to assume that you will recognise yourself in the implied image I have of you as, otherwise, I would have to explain everything, which would be both tedious as well as impossible. (Iser 1978, quoted in Winter et al 1999:p. 214)

But there is an inevitable layered, or repetitive, quality in writing about writing.

The topic of my research has always been about writing, even though it took me some time to realise that. After a false start in my first year, the writing aspect of my research focused initially on my intended practice as writer and writing as a presentational process in the expressive, 'outer' dimension. However, as my research process deepened and my practice focus shifted towards teaching, I realised that my writing was an important element of my reflective practice in the 'inner' dimension. I have been increasingly interested in 'writing as a way of learning.'

My emergent 'form,' in its intention to remain faithful to my process, has therefore to portray both the congruence between content and process, mentioned earlier, as well as this dual aspect of writing.

I have seen the 'presentational' aspect of writing as a particular version of one element of the "extended epistemology" developed by Reason and Heron (Heron 1996, pp. 52-53). They distinguish 'presentational knowing' as one of four forms in what they depict as an 'up-hierarchy.' Experiential knowing forms the base and practical knowing its apex with propositional and presentational knowing acting as the intermediate steps.

I offer an alternative 'form', cyclic rather than linear, of these multiple ways of knowing, as a fundamental image of my learning process, later in my text. I also comment on forms of presentation other than written, especially on my sense of knowing through music and artistic images. For, as a writer, I am concerned for the limitations, as I experience them, of writing, especially linear, explanatory writing, as a medium in which to express what I think of as 'wise knowing.'

Writing, then, is a central aspect of my thesis in this, the presentational sense, in both inner and outer dimensions of learning and expressing knowing. It is also my chosen craft, even though the professional practice I increasingly focus on is teaching. Writing is, I feel, an essential foundation. So, as well as struggling through the process of trying to

make sense, or meaning, of what I know through reflective writing, I have been increasingly noticing the hard craft of revision itself. The parallel process has been an almost tangible, physical appreciation for the crafting process. It is easy to see or imagine this 'hand-work' aspect of craft in, say, pottery or oil painting. The computer keyboard is a less obvious medium for artistic expression, but it has taken on for me, as an extension of my hands, a tangible sense of a crafting medium.

Hence my attempt here, in this work, is to offer you an account which is a 'true reflection' of my method in practice, a living document of my reflective process. It also intends to represent my learning about presentational knowing, particularly in the form of writing, in both the inner and outer dimensions I have briefly alluded to. But more; I would like you to appreciate what you are reading as an aesthetically enjoyable experience. And this despite, or because of, the fact that it has been assembled, or woven out of fragments written over a period of time which have been tracing a 'bumpy' cyclic learning process.

An important aspect of the aesthetic quality I am engaged in representing is an unfinished sense of the learning cycle. My particular struggle as I have continued to work at my material in the series of revisions which you will find indicated by the dating of each chapter, is to try and maintain an 'authentic account' of my learning while also trying to render the account accessible to an-other. But, of course, each time I re-enter an aspect of my research I do more learning. It is never a static or defined quality which I can 'capture' and 'explain.' It is dynamic and malleable.

A consequence of this process of re-visiting (re-vising or seeing again) established material is a degree of circularity, a kind of spiralling process, which is true to my experience but may seem somewhat repetitive.

So I am asking for some degrees of latitude from you on two counts of repetition – for 'framing' in the interests of accessibility and for circularity in the interests of authenticity. And as the Burke quotation above suggests, I hope that the repetitive quality deepens through frustration into satisfaction. For a significant aspect of the learning I am trying to represent is its circular, repetitive insistence on continuing.

Circularity and repetition are aspects of my learning process which I have increasingly appreciated as my inquiry has deepened. They seem to be qualities less appreciated in our culture which is dedicated to 'linear progress' and conclusion, which often seems to me to lead to a surface understanding rather than a deep knowing.

A depth of knowing is one aspect of what I mean by a 'wise' way of knowing. I feel that as I repeat, and maybe search for a richer, more precise formulation of words and phrases to represent adequately my meaning, I circle round what it is that I am trying to say. I am increasingly aware that what I am trying to say seems to be in the interstices, the white spaces between the words, rather than in the words themselves. I think this is the quality that the poetic form of writing allows for more readily than linear narrative – we are used, somehow to the poetic form not quite making sense directly but implying meaning. Eisner captures this quality gloriously in his remark, "*and, perhaps above all, we have poetry, that linguistic achievement whose meanings are paradoxically non-linguistic: Poetry was invented to say what words can never say. Poetry transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated.*" (Eisner 1997: p. 5). In a curious way I feel now, on further reflection, that I have been engaged in a process of trying to write conventional, academically valid, text poetically. And the reason for this is that the knowing I am trying to represent is difficult to articulate.

(One of the technical issues I face in trying to write my account in as direct a way to you, my reader, as possible, is that I often slip in a temporal reference, as in the 'now' in the preceding paragraph. I would like to maintain the sense of currency that such references convey, for that is part of my purpose, here. What I am saying, what I know, is temporary, malleable. The convention I have chosen to adopt is to date revisions of each chapter at the heading. 'Now' is 'then' in the sense of the time at which I wrote the last revision. Other timings, if I feel that they are significant, will refer to previous revisions.)

The sense that knowing lies in the spaces between the words satisfies the crucial aspect of what I call wise knowing which is that it includes the knowledge of 'not knowing.' Wise knowing, in my argument, is provisional, uncertain.

There is an example of this cyclic search for the precise formulation in the few paragraphs above. Seven paragraphs up I chose the phrase a 'true reflection.' A paragraph later I substituted this phrase by an 'authentic account.' Earlier on I had referred to 'congruence' as an important quality. This search for the telling phrase, a kind of modified repetition, is indicative of a reflexive practice in which I am trying to make sense for myself, and express to you, an aspect of my learning. Each phrase begs a question – so what do you mean by that?

For what is 'true?' or, indeed, authentic or the quality of congruence?

I return to this theme or question in Chapter 3, “The Nature of my Inquiry,” as it relates to my method and the vexed question of the validity of my research. (I choose the word ‘vexed’ to convey a quality which is both troublesome and annoying. The issue or questioning of validity has been a regular, as in the sense of repetitive, irritation for me.) The need to ‘explain’ has a similar quality. I ‘understand’ both needs – to explain and in a way which purports to respond to the need for validity.

But I am exercised by the limitations of ‘explanation’ and questions about the notion of validity. And in a way that seems fair enough – troublesome, certainly, but worthy of a good quality of ‘rational’ argument. But I am also, at an emotional level, exercised by what I perceive as an undue privileging of ‘explanation’ as a form of discourse and the implication, as it seems to me, of an inappropriate expectation of ‘validity’ or ‘truth’ in our present culture, especially in the academic field.

The annoying aspect of vexation relates to this perceived privileging, certainly, but is also a reflection of what I have learned to believe is my own limitation to succeed in ‘academic’ work.

(I write more about the implications of my believed limitation in the first, autobiographical, Section, Who I Am Becoming. I then turn to an appreciation for the work that others have been doing on the edges of representation of knowing and the privileged aspect of propositional knowing in Section 2, How I Learn which is intended to reflect on issues of validity and method).

So, if I am to be true to myself in this account I have to beware explanations of truths, presented in the interests of accessibility and acceptability, which then misrepresent my sense of the tenuous nature of knowing.

As my inquiry has deepened, I have settled into an appreciation for ways of knowing which are limited. But I am not presenting this as a validated ‘truth,’ out there, in the world, as a ‘fact,’ or, indeed as a ‘claim.’ I am presenting this limitation of knowing as my belief. I believe ‘it’ to be true, that we do not, and can not, ‘know’ much that we would apparently aspire to. And I also believe that giving up on this aspiration, to be thoroughly knowing, and therefore controlling, (for I make that connection), is a route towards our potential salvation as a species.

I am conscious of making a leap from my own appreciation of knowing, which includes this sense of not being able to know everything, to a proposition for the human species. This is obviously absurd – on what possible grounds can I speak for us all?

I suppose I can just wish that 'we', which is an inclusive term intended to encompass a proportion of humankind defined as Western, Male, White – people like me – Middle Aged and Middle Class, materially comfortable, privileged and powerful – could be more humble in our expectations for knowledge.

So, I am not presenting you here with a calm and rational account of the knowledge that I have discovered as a consequence of a pre-determined valid research method. I am, rather, trying to present my experience of learning how to make sense for myself of the circumstances in which I am 'leading my life' and how I choose to act as a consequence. And this learning process is, for it obviously continues beyond the presentation of this limited account, circular, repetitive and 'jagged.' It is infused with emotion, often raw and overwhelming, and belief. And I want to honour my experience in the telling as directly as I can in the way of the telling.

I hope that as you join me in my inquiry, as best I can set it out for now, you will be prepared to suspend judgement of the literal truth of what I have to say and appreciate the possibilities in the spaces and maybe find some new truth for yourself in the process.

I hope, too, that you will be willing to contemplate the visual images I have selected at various points in my narrative along with musical extracts on the accompanying cd.

I have been experimenting with the inclusion of such images and music in both my writing and teaching work for some years. As I will discuss in Chapter 1, From Raw-search to Re-search, I was inspired by the teaching of Eva Loewe and Noel Cobb at the London Convivium for Archetypal Psychology. I will refer to Eva's matching of image with music in particular in the first of my Interludes.

The inclusion of this further device of Interludes is my attempt to provide a sufficient framing of these images. A part of my experimentation during my research phase has been to establish a sufficient level of framing, or explanation, to warrant my inclusion of an image without wanting to impose my own particular interpretation. Interlude 1 will review my purpose for these inclusions.

The image by Redon, "The Spirit over the Waters", which I have chosen as a 'frontispiece' will be framed in Chapter 7 on Story Telling. You might like to imagine, though, as I do, the compassionate eye of the daemon figure watching over my work as I progress on my journey of learning.

A DIALECTIC THOU

1st draft March 2001

2nd draft July 2001

3rd draft September 2001

4th draft April 2002

INTRODUCTION

Intention.

As signalled in the preface, this device of a 'Dialectic Thou' is intended to provide an explanatory commentary to Robin's thesis. It is set apart at the beginning of each chapter and expressed in the third person as a way of 'distancing' it from the main account. The notion of 'distance' as a quality of reflexive practice is discussed in Chapter 3, "The Nature of My Inquiry."

The Dialectic Thou was 'originally' (as in 1st draft March 2001) intended to be an 'explanatory' introduction to the chapter. Its purpose was essentially to increase 'accessibility' for a reader by 'framing' the content of the chapter. It is distinguished from additional commentary within the chapters themselves, identified in blue engraved print, which is more concerned with the writing process and, therefore, the presentational knowing aspect. As Robin suggested in the preface, this distinction between content and process is hard to make, particularly as he has expressly set out to write in a form in which both are congruent with one another.

The device of the Dialectic Thou has, however, over the later stages of Robin's revision process, (March 2001 to April 2002) taken on a more distanced aspect of his reflective practice through writing. Robin would report that the quality of learning emerging from this 'explanatory' phase has been considerable, attesting to his recognition that multiple ways of knowing are appreciated through different forms of presentation.

Eisner makes the same point in an article which Robin will review more thoroughly in Chapter 3: *"The selection of a form of representation - or as some people call it - a symbol system (Solomon, 1997) is a selection of not only what can be conveyed but what is likely to be noticed. The selection of a form of representation, whether by mindless habit or*

by reflective choice, affects what we see." (Eisner 1997: p. 7), Robin's thesis represents his experiential learning of this notion, as his interest in the 'presentational' turns from an 'outer' concern for form to an 'inner' recognition of the significance for his own process of selecting, in this case, different ways of writing.

The overall image of the work that now occurs to Robin is less the tapestry of his original intention, in which different coloured threads would represent multiple ways of knowing, woven together gradually to form a 'whole,' and more of a multi-layered oil painting. You will be introduced to a number of such images in which the emergence of colour through light is a repetitive theme, a consequence of a particular craft in painting, shared, for example by Turner and Kahn, two of the artists represented.

In the same way that Kahn's self portrait, which appears at the end of Section 1, relies for its effect largely on the crafting process of its many workings and re-workings, so too does Robin's thesis rely for its meaning on the cyclic repetitions he alluded to in the Preface. Learning, as he experiences it, is like this accretion of layers, smudging out boundaries, building images through colour until a whole new meaning is revealed. But even then the meaning is not clear cut nor wholly obvious. It requires some effort by the viewer or, in this case you, the reader, to make your own sense of the work. For the meaning you make, he realises, may be rather different from that which he is trying to convey.

He would like you, then, to collect this device of the Dialectic Thou at the door, as it were, in the same way that you might collect a catalogue or brochure at the start of an exhibition. It then acts as a guide through the works, offering you some form of explanatory commentary as you go. But it is still up to you to make your own interpretations or judgements of what you see.

In this introductory section Robin will explain his choice of the phrase 'a dialectic thou.' He will follow this with:-

- a short biographical introduction
- a resume of the content of his thesis
- an explanation of his title
- an introduction to key aspects of his methodology
- a reflection on the nature of dialectic.

These sections are intended to provide a sufficient framing of the overall work to enable you to hold the bigger picture as separate sections unfold.

Explaining ‘a dialectic thou.’

The phrase ‘a dialectic thou’ arrived, apparently in answer to Robin’s need for such a device, quite unconsciously. The explanation of the phrase which follows is, therefore, a post-rationalisation.

The way the phrase ‘emerged’ is an example of the imaginative and cyclic way of knowing which Robin is trying to describe through his thesis. He presumes that the phrase ‘arrived’ through an unconscious processing, as though suddenly formed. But, as will be shown in the subsequent explanation, or post-rationalisation, there had been prior thought (and knowing) sent into, as it were, Robin’s unconscious processing.

It is this experience of his learning process, its unconscious leaps and loops, which has led Robin to resist ‘explaining’ too readily what he feels he now knows. For him the explanation, or formation of some kind of proposition, is but a stage in a continuously spiralling search for meaning. The distinction between meaning making and explanation is the basis for the notion of a dialectic.

> ‘dialectic.’

The choice of the word ‘dialectic’ is certainly no unconscious accident. Robin has been considerably indebted to a chapter written by Peter Reason and Peter Hawkins: “Storytelling as Inquiry.” (Reason (ed) 1988: ch. 4.)

They, Reason and Hawkins, argue that ‘explanation’ and ‘expression,’ as two basic modes of reflecting on experience, are poles of a dialectic, both of which need to be conveyed in a complete inquiry.

"Explanation", they suggest, "is the mode of classifying, conceptualizing, and building theories from experience." In this mode "the inquirer 'stands back', analyses, discovers or invents concepts, and relates these in a theoretical model."

"Expression is the mode of allowing the meaning of experience to become manifest. It requires the inquirer to partake deeply of experience, rather than stand back in order to analyse." (ibid, pp. 79-80)

Their argument continues with a suggestion that inquiry into meaning through expressive forms of account should be considered as an important aspect of research, contrasting it with a much stronger emphasis in scientific discourse on explanation.

Robin's thesis develops this argument, with a chapter on Story telling (Chapter 7) and a further suggestion of particular forms of expression carrying an additional resonance in "Reflection and Expression through Image." (Chapter 8)

At this stage in his reflections, you should appreciate that 'dialectic' has resonated for Robin in this limited sense, as in: "Ah yes, of course, the dialectic between expression and explanation!" The term will take on a deeper and more profound meaning for Robin as this piece of writing progresses. It is in this way that writing acts as a powerful reflexive method for Robin – like crafting the paint until a new or revised image emerges.

> 'thou.'

The use of the term 'thou' is also referential (even reverential), although Robin was not so immediately aware of its source. The nature of the dialectic between explanatory and expressive has been a feature of his work on his thesis and in his teaching work, referred to specifically in his chapter "Teaching Practice" (Chapter 9). The word, dialectic, and its association, was therefore 'at the front of his head.'

The word 'thou' was not so immediately present.

In his subsequent research for the writing of this section Robin turned up two long passages in his journals dating back some five years, one an extract from Ronald Gregor Smith's introduction to the 1958 second edition of Buber's work, "I and Thou," the other a review of Gadamerian Hermeneutics deriving from Brian Fay's "Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science." (Fay 1996)

Robin's feeling was of an excited re-discovery of material which had been laid down, as it seemed, ready to re-emerge at an appropriate time when it made more sense.

> The significance of Gadamerian Hermeneutics.

The particular phrase which set off this renewed 'sense making' is:-

"According to Gadamerian hermeneutics, the meaning of an act (or a text or a practice) is not something which is in the act itself; rather meaning is always meaning for someone such that it is relative to an interpreter. - - - - Meaning arises out of the relationship between an act (or text) and those trying to understand it – it is the product of an interaction of two subjects." (Fay 1996: p.142, emphasis in the original.)

As a writer, Robin has become increasingly aware of the hermeneutic dance which takes place between himself and his reader. He cannot determine nor control the meaning that his reader makes of his text – meaning arises out of the relationship between what is written and what is read as a consequence of the perceptions of these two interpreting subjects.

This is an appreciation of hermeneutics at a process level which leads Robin to strive for a relationship between himself and his reader characterised by the quality of I – Thou as expressed by Buber, of which more in a moment.

There is another aspect to the hermeneutic view which excites Robin at a content rather than process level. This is about the nature of knowing.

Fay continues in his description of Gadamerian hermeneutics to distinguish an interpretative view of meaning making from an intentionalist view:-

"On a Gadamerian account, meaning is both multivalent and dyadic: multivalent because any intentional act or its product will have many meanings depending on the interpreter(s) involved; and dyadic because meaning only emerges out of the relation between two subjects (the agent and the interpreter). This sharply contrasts with intentionalism, according to which meaning is both univalent (each act has a specific meaning) and monadic (this meaning results from just one subject, namely, the agent)". (ibid: p.142)

Robin's response to this multivalent quality of meaning making is an excited recognition at what he sees as the provisional nature of knowing. "We can never know that we know", is a notion which has a profoundly liberating effect, Robin believes. Much of his thesis pursues this proposition.

Rather as his pursuit of the presentational in its outer dimension gradually turns inwards, so has Robin's pursuit of the provisional nature of knowing become less outer advocacy and more inner inquiry. As Robin has reflected in this 'dialectic' form, he has gradually noticed an 'opening up' in his 'mechanisms' for interpretation.

Robin pursues contrasts, or dichotomies throughout his thesis. The way that the distinction between explanatory ways of "making sense" and expressive ways of "making meaning" forms the basis of the dialectic as described earlier in this section is a prime example of this interpretative process. Robin recognises increasingly that he tends to use this device as a way of arguing for, or privileging, one side of the dichotomy at the expense of the other.

And as his process of revision has deepened his perception of the patterned way in which his thinking proceeds, he has begun to appreciate the limitations he imposes through the 'splitting' process of setting up dichotomies. Chapter 2, Growing Up, returns to this aspect of Robin's learning about splitting as a more profound separation informing his pre-disposition or primary world view. This Dialectic Thou concludes with a brief review of the place of dialectic in Robin's revised thinking.

In his practice as teacher he is keenly engaged in an inquiry into the nature of the relation between teacher and participant (the term pupil would seem to imply an hierarchic distinction inimical to the kind of relationship Robin aspires to). His suggestion is that learning emerges out of a joint inquiry by both parties rather than as a transfer from the one (teacher) to the other (participant).

As his inquiry into this jointly participative act of learning has progressed, so has he had to release a stress on advocating a particular view (of one side versus another, for instance) in favour of a joint inquiry. But in a paradoxical way he has noticed that his preparedness to act in this way, participative inquiry, is the greater if he feels confident in what he knows (sic) and in his ability to present this knowledge, or provisional view, well. The tendency to over-advocate is fuelled, in his case, by an anxiety (which we can relate to his fear of criticism which will be discussed later in the thesis), rather than by 'knowing.'

In a similar way, Robin is now suggesting through the learning associated with writing this chapter, he is engaged in a reflexive inquiry into the dualistic nature of his interpretative process. He would rather substitute, maybe, a dyadic, flexible interpretative flow which recognises the relationship inherent in this view of meaning making.

Another quotation from Fay picked out of that earlier journal entry:

“Gadamer describes interpretation as a “fusion of horizons” in which a meaningful act or object emanating from one conceptual world is translated into terms relevant for another. By “horizons” Gadamer captures the situatedness of all interpretations occurring as they do within a tradition of discourse. Moreover, horizons move as those looking at them move; thus by ‘horizon’ Gadamer also hopes to indicate the openness and flexibility of conceptual paradigms.”

(ibid: p. 144)

So, in this review of his earlier interest in Gadamer, Robin notices the relation between his interest in knowing, its situatedness, and in how knowing can be transferred, or re-interpreted, across the horizons which exist in his world and those of his pupils or readers. But he is also interested in his experience of interpretation within himself.

> ‘Thou’ as in the dialectic distinction with ‘It.’

The act of writing, an attempt at interpretation, then sets off a subsequent transfer back within himself, a conversation between Robin the writer and Robin’s internal teacher. It is this process that he is trying to capture in a methodological description of reflexive practice. And the constant sense of dynamic that this situational interpretation of knowing sets up he tries to explain in his epistemological appreciation for multiple ways of knowing including a mysterious realm at the edge (on the horizon, maybe) of knowing.

Robin’s sense of his internal teacher is of a wise being, rooted in the earth. In “visioning” exercises during his therapeutic training this wise being often took the form of a goat. The goat archetype takes human form in a number of actual teachers Robin refers to within his autobiographical section. One such is Martin Buber who wrote:-

“In pure relation you have felt yourself to be simply dependent, as you are able to feel in no other relation – and simply free, too, as in no other time or place: you have felt yourself to be both creaturely and creative. You had the one feeling then no longer limited by the other, but you had both of them limitlessly and together.”

(Buber 1958: p. 106)

In this short paragraph Buber captures an essence of the “wise way of knowing” which Robin aspires to and is trying to capture in his thesis. He has the sense of a way of

knowing which is both limited and yet limitless and that somehow the release of the limitation lies in its acceptance. It is a way of knowing deeply rooted in 'creatureliness', hence the archetypal figure of the goat, almost essence of creature. But out of the connectedness and dependence of creature is released a creative potential.

Robin will return to this theme in his discussion of the imagination as a 'theatre of contention.' Somehow it is through the tension, between limitation and limitlessness, or inner and outer, that the creative potential is released.

At this introductory stage, however, it is the distinction that Buber makes between the categories of "I-Thou" and "I-It" which is the focal point for the arrived phrase (the Dialectic Thou).

In his introduction to the 1958 edition of "I and Thou", Ronald Gregor Smith suggests that:-

"They (the two categories) are pointers to the human situation, in its intricate interweaving of the personal and the impersonal, of the world to be 'used' and the world to be 'met.'"

Here is the distinction or contrast. But then Smith goes on to argue:-

*"But the very intricacy of that situation makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to use these distinctions as a kind of open sesame to the whole world of our experience. It is certainly necessary that I should warn the reader against a too facile assumption of these distinctions as involving clear-cut divisions between two worlds in which man may move. There is one world, which is twofold; but this twofoldness cannot be allocated to (let us say) on the one hand the scientist with a world of **It** and (let us say) on the other hand the poet with a world of **Thou**. Rather, this twofoldness runs through the whole world, through each person, each human activity. To recognise this is to recognise the need for reserve, for concreteness, for what Buber elsewhere calls 'the hallowing of the everyday.' Any situation may become the vehicle of the 'eternal Thou.' Human existence today, in its particular peril, cannot be rescued by any shibboleth, but only by the kind of sober re-appraisal of which Buber writes."* (ibid: p. 6)

Robin will return to a re-appraisal of Buber's significance for him in his Epilogue, particularly as he learns to appreciate one world which is two-fold. As Robin has come to realise, as he revises his material, he is increasingly attending to the 'oneness,' or

integration of the world, rather than its 'twofoldness,' or aspects of separation, and yet both exist together in a paradoxical dance.

There are a number of threads to Robin's overall thesis, as it has been developing, contained in the quotation from Buber:-

- Distinction of categories – as already noted Robin uses the device of distinction between categories, as in expression versus explanation, regularly as a way of 'exposing' his argument. He is conscious in doing so that the device is often a way of his re-vitalising or emphasising one aspect, in this case expression, in favour of the other, explanation.
- The poetic versus the scientific – this particular distinction is offered as a way of naming aspects of the 'Thou'/'It' distinction in Buber's work. This is a particular comparison which Robin will revert to in a number of different guises, favouring the poetic. Indeed, the notion of expression could be seen as poetic compared with explanation as scientific.
- Fission – energy is released in the process of fission, the separation, in physics, of a heavy atomic nucleus into two (usually) nuclei, under the impact of another particle. So, Robin sees his device of separation, of distinction, as energising, or illuminating his argument. But he recognises it has its limitations, as expressed by Smith, as suggesting too facile or clear cut distinctions in a world which is essentially onefolded.
- Fusion – hence Robin returns to the Gadamerian notion of fusion, or rather Fay's selection of that word to translate Gadamer's "verschmelzung." In Gadamerian interpretation a tension is maintained between the 'two horizons.' This aspect may be lost in our understanding of the word 'fusion,' which may suggest that the differences between the two are eliminated. But fusion is, again in physics, a source of energy in the reverse process to fission, the union of atomic nuclei to form a heavier nucleus. And fusion also suggests to Robin an alchemical process, *"the action or process of melting by intense heat; the state of fluidity as a result of being heated; the union, blending or bonding together as one whole of different things."* (OED)

- Hallowing of the everyday – a sense of reserve, as Smith puts it. Robin has translated this process of 'hallowing' as 'making the ordinary extra-ordinary' and chooses the verb form of aesthetic as 'living life as art', discussed in Chapter 6.

Robin argues for, or through, a process of making two-fold distinctions to separate out aspects of our knowing he considers to be less privileged in our present, Western, masculine culture to the detriment of the planet. But he recognises the falseness in the pursuit of dichotomy, and the propensity for this process in the culture he would wish to question. Separation has its energetic properties in the "It" world of science as wholism has its energetic value in the poetic world of "Thou."

Hence the received phrase 'the dialectic thou' carries for Robin a charge of energy which informs both the separation (fission) suggested by the dialectic distinction as well as by the interpretative move (fusion).

> The dialectic of content and process.

Robin has referred in his preface to the notion that this present device, the third person account named as the dialectic thou, is intended to be a vehicle for commentary (or explanation) of the content of his argument whereas the preface itself, and subsequent first person reflexive comments, will more likely contribute to an understanding of his process. The preface pointed out the potential for confusion and repetition in his writing process which is both presentational as well as reflexive – presenting an account as well as representing an aspect of his methodology.

In a similar way the account of the received phrase 'the dialectic thou' has focused on the 'content' of the phrase, separating out the 'dialectic' from the 'thou' and tracing them for their significance and energy.

In a curious way, however, as reflected in Robin's first draft of this chapter, he then saw the phrase as somehow representing the nature of the relationship he wished to establish with his reader. This 'Gadamerian' aspect is referred to above, but tended then to lead inward, as it were, towards Robin's relationship with his world as a tension between its two-folded distinctions and its one-world sense of connection.

The revision process, as mentioned in the preface, has led Robin through a significant cycle of further research to suggest new depths to the received phrase and the potential to confuse his account through further cycles of explanation.

(Indeed, as I (Robin) ponder where to go next, I am faced with a choice between trying to return to my original intention, as expressed in my first draft, to convey through the term 'thou' my wish to establish a reciprocal (interpretative) relationship with you, my reader, which I would distinguish as my original 'process' intention, or do I continue to ponder the mystical quality of Buber's work to which I referred in a very compressed way in that earlier draft. The tension I feel in my neck at this moment is composed of a wish, on the one hand, to expose my thinking as thoroughly as I can, to make a really good job of my account, whereas I can also feel the other hand, or voice, calling attention to this apparently never-ending process. For as well as continuing my exposition of the significance of Buber's work for my sense of connection with nature and spirit I am aware of a brief reference to the alchemical nature of fusion, a few paragraphs above, which I should explain in much more detail, for it has great resonance for me. All of these various needs are tumbling over one another, jostling for attention, alongside or in contradiction to a need to return to my original script and get done. I wonder what would suit you best, my reader, at this moment in my account. I suspect that we should have some movement into the work, otherwise you might feel permanently suspended in a perpetual cycling of the 'frame.' But there is so much layering in my appreciation for Buber and his work which is sparked off by that simple but evocative word 'thou.' Perhaps I can find some kind of shorthand noticing format to highlight these different aspects with a suggestion that they will re-appear in some form later in my thesis?).

In his original draft Robin distinguished three aspects of Buber and his work which he wanted to invoke through the use of 'Thou' in this explanatory device:-

- One aspect is in the person of Buber and the form of his writing – as poet and, mystic, possibly existentialist, who writes in a form which seems wholly congruent with his message. In this aspect Buber is an inspirational figure for Robin.

- The second aspect has been exposed more thoroughly above, which is in the distinction between 'I-Thou' and 'I-It.' This aspect refers to the particular distinction being drawn, between poetry and science, for instance, as well as the tension between two-worldiness and one-worldiness.
- The third aspect is the use of the word 'thou' to identify Robin's reader as in a reciprocal and interpretative relationship with him, as 'I.' This has been further exposed through the notion of Gadamerian hermeneutics.

In this subsequent revision Robin has reflected further on the one-world/two-world tension as it relates to his own way of seeing and explaining what he sees. This has led, in the way Robin has described his revision process as often leading into further learning, to the interesting territory of fusion and fission and their complementary ways of generating (or releasing) energy.

Robin will return to the first point above, the poetic and mystical quality of Buber, in the Epilogue to his thesis, as he describes his final image, "The Gardener Vannier," by Cezanne.

He hopes to have written enough by way of explanation of the choice of the phrase 'a Dialectic Thou' to clarify its role as a device in his thesis. As much of the material of Robin's thesis is autobiographical it might help to record, in a fairly straightforward way, some essential data about him, which is the purpose of the next section.

WHO IS ROBIN?

At the time of submitting his thesis Robin is 55 years old. He was 49 when he embarked on his period of research at the University of Bath's Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) in January 1996. His age is significant in that he describes one aspect of what his thesis is about as an account of 'growing up.'

When he entered the CARPP programme Robin was a permanent, full time, employee of Ashridge as a Business Director of the Ashridge Consulting Group, a position he had held at that time for some eight years. He had been one of the early founders of the consulting group and held a leadership role as well as being a full time consultant. He had developed a consulting practice which specialised in the boundary between organisation

and management development. His position and practice are relevant to his account as it charts changes in both.

His professional and personal circumstances had changed significantly in the period prior to his research, the years Robin describes as his period of 'raw-search.' This period could be identified as starting with his shift in career when Robin left a successful twenty years as a Personnel professional in multi-national companies to join Ashridge. He saw this as a dramatic move at the time, halving the salary he had earned as Director of HR for the European region of Rank Xerox. Its work related aspect ended a year into the research phase when Robin left Ashridge as a full time employee and established an independent consulting practice, remaining a close associate of ACL.

In addition to changing his career substantially with his move to Ashridge, Robin embarked on a number of formative educational experiences in such areas as psychotherapy, spirituality, ecology and the arts. He acknowledges, in his thesis, important teachers and places of learning. In a way the transition from raw- to re- search is an acknowledgement of converting these early learnings in to more considered 'scholarship.' His choice to pursue his scholarship through the mechanism of a PhD programme was partly a recognition for the need of a systematic 'container', and partly a wish for recognition by 'the academy'.

An aspect of this desire for recognition which is not referred to in the text is what Robin describes as his rocky relationship with the 'academic,' based on his prior experience. As a consequence of the upheavals in Robin's early life consequent upon his father's death when he was eight years old, he went to a succession of preparatory schools and scraped through the common entrance exam to gain a place at King's School Bruton. His subsequent academic record there was of a series of significant expectations based on his course work being dashed by his performance at exams. This culminated in his relative failure at A level, with two poor grade passes and two fails in the four subjects at which he was expected to excel. In the same way that his entry to Bruton was perceived as 'second best', he scraped into university through the clearing scheme to study engineering as a 'sandwich' student at Brunel University. This time, though, his progress was pretty much reversed, as he was demoted to an ordinary degree scheme at an early stage in the course, subsequently being promoted again to the honours stream for his final year and gaining a first class honours degree along with the Senate Prize.

There are two aspects worth noting from this brief account of Robin's educational experience. One is around educational 'performance.' Robin's ambivalence towards 'the academy' and his reservations about academic rigour and validity regularly feature in his account, especially in the opening to the second section. In a way, one could see Robin's search into the nature of knowing as a consequence of his curiously inconsistent academic history.

The other aspect is reflected in his choice of subjects both at Bruton and Brunel. He studied sciences at A level and engineering for his degree despite his keen interest in English and music at school and psychology at university. These choices were largely made for pragmatic and responsible reasons, as likely to lead to a secure career. In educational terms, this subsequent period of raw- and re- search has been a deliberate re-visiting of those earlier, missed subjects, albeit in distinctly different forms.

The personal aspect of Robin's raw-searching – indeed the basis for its raw-ness – is also captured so far as he has felt necessary, in his account. His first marriage ended in separation in May 1995, after twenty six years, when he joined Donna, the dedicatee of this work.

The spring of 1997 was eventful.

Robin and Donna finalised their respective divorces and left their permanent employments. They set themselves up as independent consultants and moved away from Milton Keynes to the cottage they had bought and renovated in Devon, intending to combine consulting with writing.

Robin had long held a dream to return to the place where his grandparents had lived which he felt to be his 'home.'

Robin describes himself as an aspiring writer. He was working on a novel, provisionally titled Ham Stone, when he started this research. The writing of his thesis has rather over-shadowed his 'creative' writing. The 'practice' he mainly refers to in his thesis is as teacher. As well as maintaining his consulting practice, Robin currently teaches on the Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting (AMOC) programme. This is a two year part time MSc for practitioners in consulting. In 2001 the programme involves supervising the third cohort in their final dissertation phase, teaching the fourth cohort in their second semester and recruiting for the fifth cohort. Robin has been influential as a founding

member of the faculty, developing the teaching and practice of inquiry as a fundamental aspect of the consulting process and as a learning methodology for the participants.

Robin also taught for three years an elective course for MBA students at Cranfield University Business School. The course, which he taught with Donna, was called “Leading into the new Millenium.” It ran over six sessions of looking at leadership through different perspectives. Aspects of both of these programmes are referred to in the thesis.

In the end Robin has focused his research ‘practice,’ in the sense of ‘professional practice’ as contained in the name of ‘The Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice,’ on his **teaching**. When he first joined the research programme at the University of Bath he was in the process of considering a career change at Ashridge from consultant to **researcher**. His proposed research title was “The Myth of Management.’ He considers the period covered by his research as an apprenticeship towards becoming a **writer**. His main source of income throughout this period has been derived from his practice as **consultant**.

At the end of his first year of research, while submitting his transfer paper to qualify for a re-registration from the Diploma stage to the MPhil stage of the programme at Bath, Robin re-named his thesis as “Life Leadership: Crafting a Personal Account of Learning to Lead my Life Well.” In this way he hoped to capture the emerging themes of his research and to encompass a multiplicity of practice, some of it ‘professional,’ as in the sense of ‘work’ and some of it the practice of living.

In the same way that the theme or content of his thesis has had an emergent quality so has his research methodology. The two sections which follow are intended as succinct descriptions of content and method as he is now able to see them in retrospect.

A RESUME OF CONTENT.

The question “so, what’s it about then?” has been recurrent and productive. This re-drafting process, as has been described earlier, has featured as a significant element in his reflexive methodology. And his reflections have continued to modify the content to some degree.

In this section, two pieces from earlier drafts of an introductory chapter, now replaced, have been selected to provide descriptions of what might be described as

contextual content. One is personal, a reflection of the ‘inner’ aspect of Robin’s research. The other is ‘outer,’ a personal statement of how he sees the world context in which he ‘learns to lead his life.’

You will see, as his thesis unfolds, that this setting of inner in relation to outer forms one aspect of his proposition about developing leadership, which is to raise one’s awareness of both and recognise the envelope in which they intersect. He will describe this envelope as the ‘mandorla’ in Chapter 5, “The Imagination.”

➤ **Personal, or inner, context.**

Robin calls the personal aspect of his thesis ‘Growing Up.’ He described it this way in a draft dated March 2000, just before his 53rd birthday:-

“It’s about a particular stage in my life’s journey, a transition towards or into my third age, that remains clear. It is set in the context of Western culture at the turn of the millenium, with a heightened awareness of the damage that we may already have irreparably done to Gaia.

This part of my journey has taken me away from, to some limited extent, the world of organisations and management, living a life proscribed by conventional concerns for family security and solidarity, towards a life as writer, living on the edge, almost literally in a geographical sense and increasingly at odds with our material culture. It is about attempting to find a dynamic balance between frugality and elegance, a way of living at peace with the Earth.

In practice my journey has arrived at what feels like another intermediate stop. I have moved, physically. I have gone independent. I have shifted the balance of my work, somewhat, towards teaching as well as coaching and consulting. I still struggle to hold to my writing time.

I think growing up, making decisions, leading one’s life with compassion and responsibility, is what this is about. My version of these things.”

This passage contains a number of key or ‘attentional phrases’ which will be explained further in the next section on methodology. These relate essentially to that aspect of Robin’s thesis which is about ‘leading his life’ where the ‘practice’ is living, or ‘being.’

Or, as his thesis is fundamentally about learning, the aspect he is learning about is 'becoming' – becoming grown up.

As indicated earlier the particular 'practice,' in the sense of professional practice Robin has focused on is his teaching. Another section of his earlier resume clarifies this aspect of his content:-

"So, I write about what I teach, how I teach and the whys of the what and how.

This is the emerging practice I choose to focus on.

To arrive at the what of what I teach I have been studying, doing what I call my scholarship. There are two elements, in particular, I feel that I want to write about particularly. One is what I call my aesthetic – an appreciation for the "way of beauty." The other aspect I want to include more explicitly is my philosophical reflections about knowing. The particular teaching session I include in my thesis is about this. I try to represent what I teach based on my scholarship over this period of heightened research.

But the fact that I teach and teach this in this way is bound up with who I am becoming. In two ways.

The first is that I teach with a mission. My mission is a consequence of who I am and how I see the world at present. I am teaching about a transformation in world view.

The second is that I do not believe that I can teach about this without, in some way, being it. What I teach is who I am.

So part of my intention throughout this period of research has been to grow my awareness of my being – to become grounded enough to present myself and my thinking in this explicit way and to do so with appropriate humility and vulnerability.

But I also believe that there is an issue of authenticity at stake here.

I want to present my learning to teach in this way alongside, interwoven with learning to be who I presently am, in this way, because both are inter-connected.

This is what it is like, I am trying to say, to be participative, to live in a participative world, with awareness."

This section again contains significant features, as the earlier one included key or attentional phrases.

You will see in the last paragraph a statement about authenticity in presentation, “This is what it is like, I am trying to say, to be participative,” which Robin has explained further in his Preface. The terms ‘participative’ and ‘learning’ are presented as synonymous, almost, in this passage. In general ‘participative’ will refer to ‘living with awareness’ in the outer dimension while ‘learning’ refers to ‘raising awareness’ in the inner dimension. Robin uses the term ‘scholarship,’ as in the second paragraph of the passage quoted above, to refer to ‘learning’ in the sense of theoretical or propositional knowing. He will return to different forms of knowing, or an extended epistemology, in Chapter 3, “The Nature of my Inquiry.”

The second feature to note from this passage is how the phrase “What I teach is who I am” led to the form or structure of Robin’s thesis.

(Now, of course, this phrase is much more significant than the fact that it led to the structure of my thesis. Or maybe the fact that it offered a structure is evidence of the power of the phrase. But the phrase itself is a bit trite, isn’t it?

As I now reflect once more on the significance and validity of the phrase I find myself in a familiar tension. I am, I recognise, making a claim for ‘authenticity’ in the sense of congruence between what I say, as teacher, and what I do as life leader. I am suggesting that this quality of authenticity, the quality of congruence, is crucial to living ‘participatively.’

The familiar tension arises each time I feel myself rise towards, as it were, ‘making a claim.’ Can I really substantiate, for myself let alone anyone else, a claim for congruence?

My way of resolving the tension is contained in my methodology, to which I will return shortly. For I make no absolute claim – such a possibility does not exist in my way of knowing. I can only strive towards it. And I am learning ways to reflect on and recognise my relative success. My belly or gut is a good detecting instrument. It is highly attuned to my nervous state and will send shivers of apprehension through my system if it detects incongruence.

As it is concerned about the baldness of that phrase taken out of context. There is an inter-relation between who I am and what I teach and my explicit attention, in my research, has been on two aspects of this relation. The one is on a kind of practical benefit of congruence – the more congruent I am the better teacher I am. The other is an ethical

aspect or belief, which is that to teach about, for example, a participative view of the world, I must act in a participative way, with awareness.

As with the 'received' phrase a dialectic thou which I have tried to explain above, so with this little phrase – 'what I teach is who I am.' It works in a number of different ways. It works upwards or outwards, as it were, to my explicit attention on the ethical aspect of how I practise (in the outer dimension) and it informs my inner learning. It is this latter element which emerged in the structuring of my thesis.)

Theoretical Content.

Robin's discovery, through his reflections during the writing of the quoted passage, was that his scholarship acted as a bridge between 'who he is' and 'what he does.' His 'propositional knowing' is the medium through which he expresses himself (his becoming) in his practice.

The form or skeleton for his thesis thus emerged as:-

- Who I am – becoming
- What I know – scholarship
- How I teach – practice.

It seemed clear to Robin that this unconscious emergence, as it felt, of form owes a debt to a proposition about multiple ways of knowing offered by Peter Reason and John Heron in their extended epistemology. (Heron and Reason 1997: pp. 274-294)

Under a sub-section titled "Epistemology: Critical Subjectivity and Four Ways of Knowing," Heron and Reason argue that *"a participative world view, with its notion of reality as subjective-objective, involves an extended epistemology. A knower participates in the known, articulates the world, in at least four interdependent ways: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical."*

The authors argue further that these four ways of knowing can (or should) be represented in an 'up-hierarchy' in which the ascending order "consummates the celebration of being values."

Experiential knowing forms the base and “*means direct encounter, face-to-face meeting: feeling and imaging the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing - - - Experiential knowing articulates reality through inner resonance with what there is and through perceptually enacting its forms of appearing.*” (ibid: pp. 280-1)

This is akin to the dimension which Robin refers to (as described above) as ‘learning,’ an awareness in the inner dimension. He has suggested in his description of reflecting on the given phrase, a dialectic thou, the notion of an ‘internal teacher’ with whom he interprets, in the Gadamerian sense. As a reader of Heron and Reason his interpretation of their description, as quoted above, is to see in the phrase “articulates reality through inner resonance” the same experience of knowing as the conversation which takes place between himself and his internal teacher.

(I would like to pause a moment here for further reflection. My supervisor, Professor Judi Marshall, has made a marginal comment on my previous draft of this section which reads: “*I am surprised that the direct encounter, being in the world aspect, is not somehow held before it becomes inner and worked within internally.*” I want to comment in both content and process dimensions, partly as a demonstration of my reflective practice, but also because I am perplexed. When I first read Judi's comment I quite quickly created an explanation for myself which went something like: “Oh, how interesting. Isn't this an example of how Judi and I might process experience differently? Probably she starts from the outer (extraverted, sensing) dimensions and moves inward whereas I start from the inner (introverted, intuitive) and move outwards.” This would accord with my pre-judged perception of my own process and, perhaps, a pre-sumption about Judi's. I now think of this as my initial, defensive, routine in which I don't really ‘hear’ the comment, at some level rejecting it as critical. But then I read the comment again, now noticing (or hearing) it differently. “Surely, I muse to myself, I must take data in from the outer dimension, first, before processing it, which I may do intuitively?” So, I now feel more satisfied that I have taken due notice of the comment. But in content terms, I remain perplexed. I feel, somehow, that I approach ‘experience’, in its outer ‘reality’, through a pre-formed perspective which will determine my appreciation for it. Not so surprising, this, for surely that is what we mean, in hermeneutic terms, by pre-judgement or pre-knowing? The “inner resonance” that captures congruence between an inner expectation and outer experience might be ‘knowing’ and, at some level of excitement transcends itself into ‘aesthetic

knowing' in my view. But I digress. For now I remain perplexed - in what sequence does the process Reason and Heron describe as 'experiential knowing' proceed?)

The second level in Heron and Reason's up-hierarchy is the form of knowing which has exercised Robin most thoroughly in his research. They call this **presentational knowing** and describe it as emerging from and grounded in experiential knowing. *"It is evident in an intuitive grasp of the significance of our resonance with and imaging of our world as this grasp is symbolized in graphic, plastic, musical, vocal, and verbal art forms. It clothes our experiential knowing of the world in the metaphors of aesthetic creation, in expressive spatiotemporal forms of imagery. These forms symbolize both our felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning embedded in our enactments and its appearing."* (ibid: p. 281)

Robin has much more to say about this form of knowing in later sections of his thesis, especially through Section 3 "What I Know."

At this stage of his summary of the content of his thesis it might suffice to say that Robin finds significant resonance with the description offered by Heron and Reason about presentational knowing 'emerging from and being grounded in experiential knowing'. Some form of presentation – or expression – is needed to 'enact its (experiential knowing) forms of appearing' certainly. But to then suggest, by implication, that this is the role of presentational knowing, seems to Robin a limitation imposed by the form of the up-hierarchy itself.

Robin will return to his argument about the up-hierarchy form in which Heron and Reason present their extended epistemology in Chapter 3 "The Nature of my Inquiry." His particular concern in that case is about the positioning of practical knowing at the apex of the up-hierarchy. Heron and Reason are clear in the priority they place on practical knowing and action: *"we believe that what we learn about our world will be richer and deeper if this descriptive knowledge is incidental to a primary intention to develop practical skills to change the world."* (ibid: p. 281)

It seems clear that the authors merit consummation in action, the upward process they describe, over the validation of truth-values in experience, although they also argue that *"it is equally important that action not only consummates the prior forms of knowing but is grounded in them."*

At this point, then, Robin is appreciating the possibilities of the multiple ways of knowing suggested by this particular extended epistemology but questioning the relations between them and order of priority suggested by the form of the up-hierarchy. As well as the particular issue of the significance accorded to action, and thence practical knowing, Robin wants to separate out presentational knowing from a too tight relation with experiential knowing. His argument, as it emerges from his own reflections on his experience of learning, is essentially that the presentational aspect of learning acts as the intermediary between all stages, or ways, of knowing.

In the framework under critical review, the third level of knowing is **propositional knowing** which is *"knowing in conceptual terms that something is the case; knowledge by description of some energy, entity, person, place, process, or thing. It is expressed in statements and theories that come with the mastery of concepts and classes that language bestows."*(ibid)

This is the particular way of knowing which Robin suggests is understood in the present Western culture as knowledge. There is a belief that we can know everything in this way and that this is the only real way to know. Eisner captures this privileged way of knowing: *"There are, of course, good reasons why text - or more precisely propositions - should be so central to our traditional view of knowledge. For one, our view of knowledge is tied up with matters of verification, and verification is tied up with matters of truth. Truth is related to claims, and claims cannot be made without making assertions. Assertions, in turn, require propositions and propositions return us to text."* (Eisner 1997: p. 7)

Interestingly Heron and Reason complete their description with the statement (or proposition) *"propositions themselves are carried by presentational forms – the sounds or visual shapes of the spoken or written word – and are ultimately grounded in our experiential articulation of a world."*

Robin will suggest in his concern for language, especially in written form, that propositional knowing has attained its pre-eminence because of our ability to express 'concepts and classes' as literal truths. And that in the move from spoken to written language is a separation which often divorces propositions from any grounding in experience. So, he distinguishes between the 'spoken' and 'written' word as offering

potentially different senses of 'truth'. The 'literal' truth of the written proposition is his particular concern given his general argument for the provisional and contextual nature of knowledge which is more readily conveyed orally. Hence his 'presentational' task, in writing, which is to convey a conversational 'tone', in which propositions are but possibilities, full of paradoxical perplexities. Somehow he wants to avoid the disembodied separation of the written text which conveys the delusion of certainty.

Finally **practical knowing** is *“knowing how to do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence. We would argue that practical knowledge is in an important sense primary. It presupposes a conceptual grasp of principles and standards of practice, presentational elegance, and experiential grounding in the situation within which the action occurs. It fulfils the three prior forms of learning, brings them into fruition in purposive deeds, and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment.”* (Heron and Reason 1997: p. 281)

It is interesting to reflect that when Robin first read this article, at the time of starting his research, he shared the belief contained in this proposition and the up-hierarchy form. It seemed then, and still does to some extent, that Heron and Reason are capturing in this short description a form of knowing which Robin reveres as craft.

But again, as he makes this interpretative move, as with separating out presentational knowing from a too close relation with experiential knowing, so does the notion of craft question the inter-relation between practical and propositional knowing. The skill and dedication of craft, including presentational excellence which might be described as the aesthetic of craft, lies more closely in Robin's view to an articulation of experiential rather than propositional knowing.

As his research progressed and Robin reflected more deeply on his own experience of knowing in multiple forms, he 'received' or 'created' a revised form or structure which he calls the 'bumpy wheel of learning.'

This is illustrated on the next page.

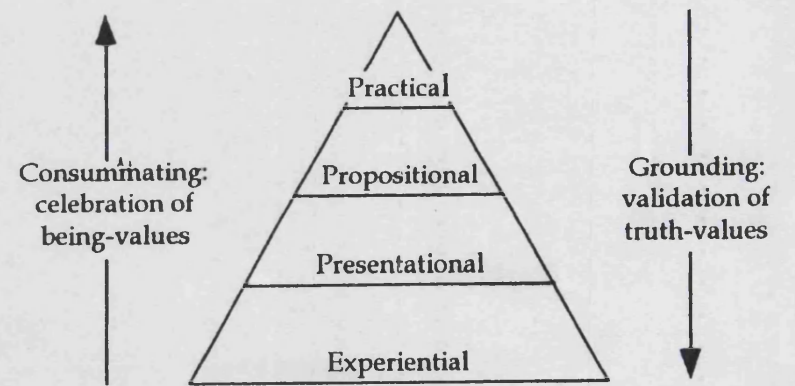
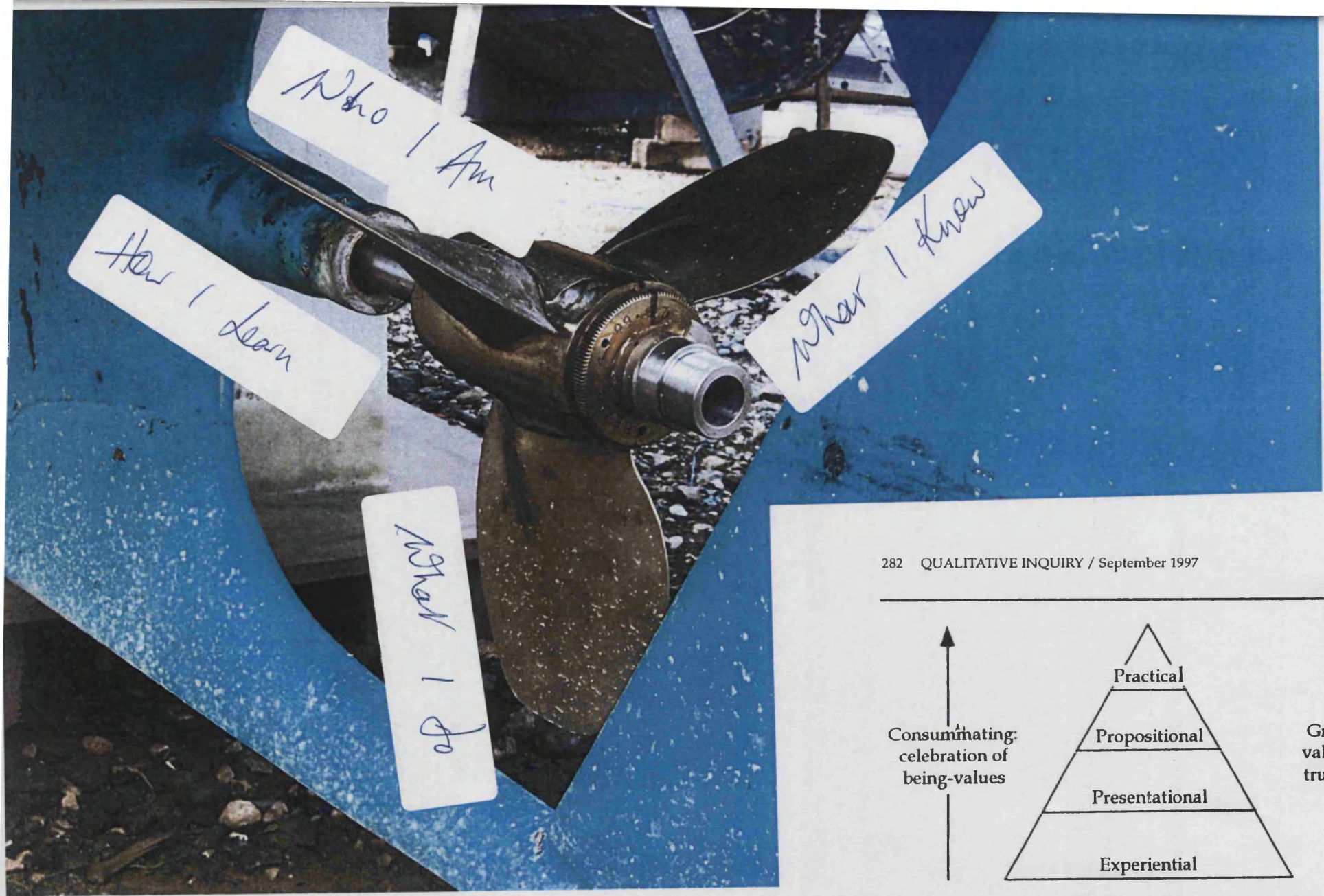


Figure 1

The 'bumpy wheel' translates the extended epistemology into a dynamic process in which the forms of knowing are related to the three initial sections of Robin's thesis:-

- Who I am – becoming – experiential knowing
- What I know – scholarship – propositional knowing
- What I do – practice – practical knowing.

Presentational knowing has been re-configured into the axle around which these three forms of knowing rotate, which they can do in either direction. There is no intention to suggest a particular trajectory or progression in the cyclic form, Robin claims!

(The image that I have selected for conveying my notion of the 'bumpy wheel' is a boat's propeller. The idea to photograph my boat's propeller occurred some time after I had collected a piece of wood, spotted as I walked, which looked like one arm, or leg, of my imaginary 'wheel', which until then had been a ground based object, bumping along. The shape of the wooden 'leg' reminded me of the 'arm' of a propeller, and so the idea took off. (Which is what air based propellers are for!) The axle of my bumpy wheel thus becomes the shaft around which the propeller turns and the direction of travel is now along the shaft.

In this chosen image, then, presentational knowing is represented not only by the fulcrum around which the others rotate but also the medium through which they combine to 'progress'. I make no particular meaning, in the sense of a proposition, of this transformation from ground based bumpy wheel to water based propeller, with its associated sense of motion, but I am intrigued.)

It would be convenient to suggest a fourth section, which indeed exists, as related to presentational knowing:-

- How I know – learning – presentational knowing.

But Robin is more inclined to see presentational knowing as the informing content of the whole thesis, rather than of any one section, as indeed is the subject of learning. Section 2 records Robin's inquiry into 'methodology' which has extended into a more general reflection on his learnings about epistemology. In a way this section is best considered as an inquiry into the validity of provisional knowing and offers an example of Robin's cyclic learning process as he struggles to 'make sense' of his own experience of knowing.

The bumpy rotation of the wheel in Robin's ground based form is intended to suggest another distinction from the geometrical precision of the up-hierarchy. Heron and

Reason raise the challenge of what they call critical subjectivity. *“It involves an awareness of the four ways of knowing, of how they are currently interacting, and of ways of changing the relations between them so that they articulate a reality that is **unclouded by a restrictive and ill-disciplined subjectivity.**”* (ibid p. 280, stress inserted by author.)

Robin’s reaction to this challenge is visceral. While certainly appreciating the developmental value, as suggested, in separating out and clarifying these different ways of knowing, Robin’s experience of craft, his revered form of action, is of a cloudy combination. It is in the combination, or integration of these forms of knowing that creative acts are formed, is his belief.

Just to complete this section, then, with confirmation of the form of the thesis:-

- Section 1 – Who I am – becoming
- Section 2 – How I know – methodology
- Section 3 – What I know – scholarship
- Section 4 – What I teach – practice.

(Just a technical note at this point. I tend to use the term 'section' to mean both Sections, as in the four Sections identified above and sections within chapters. I know that I have transferred to the use of 'parts' in this latter, within chapter, sense in the long chapter The Nature of my Research in Section 2. Otherwise I have tried to distinguish the two meanings by the use of upper and lower case.)

And to enjoy the possibilities of the 'bumpy wheel' as it has transformed itself into a boat's propeller, the 'cloudy combination' of these aspects of Robin's learning could be discerned in the churned up wake of his life progressing through lively sea. This record is, necessarily, an attempt to 'explain' post-hoc, looking behind at what has been. And Robin's progress is through a context in which he is, in his own belief, inextricably bound up and connected.

This third aspect of content Robin has been researching is contextual.

Contextual content.

In turning to this aspect of his research Robin makes the leap he referred to in his Preface from the personal to the global and his concern for survival. In a review of E.O. Wilson's latest book, "The Survival of Life", (Wilson 2002) Robin McKie chooses to quote:

"An Armageddon is approaching. Not the cosmic war and fiery collapse of mankind foretold in scripture. It is the wreckage of the planet by an exuberantly plentiful and ingenious humanity." (McKie in "The Observer" 28/4/02)

Quite whose survival Wilson is concerned for is not apparent from this selected passage. His title suggests the survival of life itself. Robin is ambivalent, preferring to turn to salvation, presumably human, rather than survival, as an initial step.

A passage from an earlier draft captures something of the direct appeal of Robin's concern:-

"It is about my notion of knowing and the importance of re-embracing mystery as a route to our salvation on Earth.

I contrast the scientific project of Western Man with the earlier Romantic period of Western culture, also referring to the Renaissance in the person of Ficino and the neo-platonist tradition. I do this to argue that what we now need, at this particular moment in our history, is a philosophy, a way of viewing the world, which is participatory and non-anthropocentric. In particular I argue for an appreciation that as we continue to strive to know more, through the application of our scientific prowess, we learn more and more about the sheer complexity and inter-relatedness of life on this planet of ours and its surrounding atmosphere. It is this quality of appreciation which has moved artists to expressions of beauty. And it is this same quality, of humility in the face of natural wonders, which the great scientists, too, have experienced, that offers us the possibility of a re-awakened wisdom, a second renaissance.

I am not arguing against science and for art. I am arguing that at their apex of achievement both art and science see alike – they see beyond the known into a vast expanse of unknown, into mystery, which can only be expressed poetically, tangentially, metaphorically. It cannot be explained, although the attempt may be made through some form of spirituality.

There is, in this wise way of knowing, a continuation of Man's search for truth and understanding, certainly, but also of Woman's reverence for future life, if I may enter this gendered distinction which is the conclusion Richard Tarnas reaches in one of my reference texts, "Passion of the Western Mind" (Tarnas, 1991).

My interest is that this combination offers a recognition that we cannot control nature. If we realise that we cannot know all there is to know, that there will be yet further complexity to add to the mind-boggling stuff we already know, then we will not presume to tamper with nature without serious caution and much consideration of possible consequences. It is this presumption to know everything that leads to the literally awful, in its modern meaning, expectation that we can save ourselves through the same technological cleverness that is already destroying vast tracts of our habitation. With this sense of limited knowing, no Government would presently sanction the growing of experimental genetically modified crops, for example, for fear that the damage they might just anticipate will already be done – our environment will be inexorably altered. The lessons of nuclear waste seem not to be learned.

So, I have a practical outcome in intention – a re-educated Western Mind, wisely attuned to our salvation.

And I have a method for this re-education in mind, too, which is through a re-appreciation of beauty. It seems that we will not frighten ourselves into a realisation of what we have already done and continue to do to our World. I believe that we may love our way back into connection by becoming artists of our own lives. This is essentially what I mean by “Life Leadership – learning to lead our lives well.” This is re-turning aesthetic into a verb.”

Robin’s thesis is not a carefully worked argument that the world is as he sees it. It is set in a context in which he believes that the world is, in some significant sense, in peril as a consequence of Man’s hubris. The question he then faces is about the choices he makes. He calls this process of choice making ‘life leadership.’

Life Leadership: Crafting an Account of Learning to Lead my Life Well.

This title has stood the test of time as a sufficiently comprehensive and evocative indication of what Robin's thesis is about. As you would imagine by now he would argue for taking the title as an integrative whole, representing as it does the threads or layers of his thesis which need to be seen congruently. But for the sake of explication a few separations:-

> **Life Leadership** – this element of the title is a relic, in a way, of Robin's original intention which was to write a thesis about the 'myth of management,' contrasting the term leadership with management as part of that process. The term leadership is also crucial and central to his revenue earning practice as a consultant, in which he specialises in leadership development in a number of different forms.

The term has, however, retained its place in Robin's thinking as representing his view that we 'lead our own lives.' In this sense leadership is about choice. And Robin's argument is that in order to lead others well we need to lead ourselves well. This is a continuation of his argument about authenticity, in the sense of congruence, which was rehearsed earlier in relation to teaching.

> **Crafting** – this term has briefly appeared in the section on practical knowing. It first appeared as a reference to writing – the crafting of an account. Much of Robin's learning, as a writer, has been in the discipline of re-working material which is a form of craft.

Robin now chooses to take the term in isolation as referring to craft as an expression of an aesthetic ideal which is to 'live life as art.' In this sense craft refers to the craft of teaching, the craft of consulting and the craft of tea making.

(Tea making is introduced here deliberately as a reference to "The Way of Tea," or the culture of wabi-sabi as taught by the tea master and Zen monk Sen no Rikyu. *"The simplicity of wabi-sabi is best described as the state of grace arrived at by a sober, modest, heartfelt intelligence. The main strategy of this intelligence is economy of means. Pare down to the essence, but don't remove the poetry. Keep things clean and unencumbered, but don't sterilize. (Things wabi-sabi are emotionally warm, never cold.) Usually this implies a limited palette of materials. It also means keeping conspicuous features to a minimum. But it doesn't mean removing the invisible connective tissue that somehow binds*

the elements into a meaningful whole. It also doesn't mean in any way diminishing something's "interestingness", the quality that compels us to look at that something over, and over, and over again." (Koren 1994)

Craft, then, carries a significant weight of meaning for Robin including the simplicity of the culture of wabi-sabi. His own 'attentional phrase' for this quality is elegant frugality, to be described in the next section. But in a way, too, craft and aesthetic are inter-changeable phrases in Robin's personal lexicon. But John Lane suggests that *"the value of craft work can be more than aesthetic: it can give expression to a life-philosophy; it can also provide the subtlest transmission of soul."* (Lane 2001) Robin turns this argument around in his chapter on the Aesthetic Perspective, (Chapter 6), suggesting that we re-turn the word aesthetic into a verb, in which it might be synonymous with craft work. And in that sense aesthetic becomes an expression, as in elegant frugality, of Robin's aspirant life philosophy.

(In this recent book by John Lane, "Timeless Simplicity" (Lane 2001), I notice a quotation from Henryk Skolimowski, *"Frugality, we must remember, is to be conceived not as harsh austerity or poverty but an elegant frugality, as doing more with less."* (Skolimowski 1991 in Lane 2001). I had thought it was my own phrase, but perhaps I picked it up from Skolimowski himself, whom I met in Bath, or through some morphogenic resonance. Lane's book is providing a reminder of the challenge that this phrase provides for me, a reflexive process through reading.)

Robin has begun to appreciate the craft aspect of writing, and especially revision, as he suggested in his Preface. Crafting 'for an audience' has taken on an additional sense of satisfaction as he has learned to embrace, rather than retreat from, this aspect of writing. Although he has clearly been engaged in writing a personal account, the turning outwards of this towards an audience has created a more distanced, critical reflection.

> A Personal Account – at some stage in his first year of research Robin took a distinct step in recognising that his research topic was primarily autobiographical. He records in Section 2 A Reflection on Hearing Differently, the moment, as it seemed, that this transition occurred; "it is almost as though the neat symmetry and coherence of my proposal perfectly distorts, as in some kind of fairground mirror, the incoherence and confusion of what my inquiry was really about – dislocation and disquiet."

His prior proposal at that stage was a modified version of the myth of management research topic which he had been clinging on to with a sense that a topic ‘out there’ in the third person was somehow more responsible or legitimate. It took some further sessions within his supervision group for Robin to accept the legitimacy of his ‘new’ topic, new only in the sense that it was now named and framed as a first person inquiry rather than masquerading under a different title.

One of the major implications of this shift in inquiry perspective has been for methodology, which will be addressed initially in the next section, and subsequently in Chapter 3.

> **Of Learning** – if there is one word which captures the essence of Robin’s thesis then it is probably learning. His account is an attempt at capturing the circular, repetitive, obscure and complex way in which he experiences his own learning. In Section 1, his autobiographical inquiry, Robin attempts to track a shift in learning at a level of raising awareness to a subsequent level in which choice becomes possible through some kind of shift in perceptual frame. In the second chapter of that section, Growing Up, Robin invokes ideas from an alchemical view of psychotherapy to frame his discussion of his own learning process.

As a teacher Robin is obviously fascinated by how others learn, too. He has developed a number of ‘working propositions’ or guiding notions about how to teach which are developed in Chapter 9, “Teaching Practice.”

> **To Lead my Life Well** – the ‘attentional phrases’, which will be explained in the methodological resume section of this chapter, are Robin’s attempt to define what ‘leading my life well’ means to him.

Robin makes no attempt to justify or validate the notion that he is “leading his life well,” recognising that he is the one to make a judgement, according to his own aspirations. It seems unlikely that he will be easily satisfied, seeing a struggle to make sense of living in an essentially materialist culture which is intrinsically self-destructive.

The Epilogue offers a view of how this struggle is progressing.

As well as having some understanding of who Robin is and what he is attempting through his thesis, it seems important that you should have some initial understanding of his methodology. Chapter 3 offers a more extended discussion.

A RESUME OF METHODOLOGY.

Towards the end of his review of his methodology in Chapter 3, "The Nature of my Inquiry," Robin summarises thus:- "My claim is to a method akin to 'Living Life as Inquiry,' focusing on Becoming. There are a series of qualities of 'Becoming' that I aspire to and inform me in the process of my inquiry. Their product might well be termed 'poetic wisdom,' the quality I strive for in my 'ethnopoetic account.' My ways of knowing are increasingly a function of "robust appreciation of my senses and a vigorous imagination." (a discussion of this phrase is included later in this section under Poetic Wisdom.)

This short resume will attempt to make sufficient sense of each element of this claim to enable you to enter the work trusting in the methodological process by which it has been formed.

> **Living Life as Inquiry** – this phrase is a direct reference to the title of Judi Marshall's paper (Marshall 1999). Robin will refer to this paper in more detail in chapter 3 as it relates to his methodological practice. At this introductory stage he notes a statement by Marshall which appears in her chapter in the "Handbook of Action Research." (Reason and Bradbury, eds, 2001): *"In earlier papers on inquiry I have sometimes started by describing research as partly "personal process", noting how we draw on our lives and their themes to inform our inquiries. This labelling has value, yet it maintains some sense of separated selves; as if I could be not-personal, a relic perhaps of objectivity. I currently prefer the notion of inquiry as life process, respecting how inquiring is a core of my being, and that my full (multiple) being is involved in any "researching" I undertake."* (ibid: p. 438.)

Robin prefers the notion of 'living inquiry' to the notion of 'action inquiry.' (see, for example Torbert 2001: ch 23). His questioning of the privileging of action has been rehearsed earlier in the discussion of Heron and Reason's extended epistemology and is further reviewed in Chapter 3.

Robin recognises that his research methodology is firmly rooted in the first person. Reason and Bradbury include this orientation as a valid process in the Preface to their Handbook: *"First-person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. First-*

person research practice brings inquiry into more and more of our moments of action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities.” (Reason and Bradbury 2001: pp. xxv-xxvi.)

While Reason and Bradbury advocate a broader research methodology, *“the most compelling and enduring kind of action research will engage all three strategies: first-, second- and third-person”* (ibid), Robin has consistently deepened his personal inquiry into learning through his own experience.

> **On becoming** – this emphasis on his personal learning experience led Robin to a further re-formulation, from ‘action’ to ‘living’ to ‘being and becoming.’ In an early draft of his methodology chapter Robin wrote: “But I am more interested in Being and in Becoming, and learning about this more subtle process of development, than action. My practice development is ‘on becoming’ a writer and how this affects my approach to other practice areas such as my consulting and teaching, certainly, but how is it to become a writer, believing in a certain quality of poetic wisdom.”

Reason and Marshall note from their experience of supervising graduate students: *“From the existential perspective individuals are ‘thrown into the world, confronted with a set of issues – problems or life opportunities – with which they have to deal, and creating their life through the choices they make in the face of these issues. An individual’s being is affirmed by and arises out of his or her choices, so that in the extreme, we are our choices. A central existentialist concern is the relation of being to non-being; the individual’s sense of being is enhanced by the courage of his or her choice-making in the face of a world which is in the end unknowable and unpredictable; in contrast non-being is a consequence of avoiding such choices.”* (Reason and Marshall 2001: p. 413.)

In the same chapter Reason and Marshall note that: *“A psychodynamic perspective complements the existential by pointing out that many of the limitations on being here-and-now have their roots in childhood experience. - - - From this view of individual psychological development, we argue that researchers often choose (consciously or unconsciously) research topics which will re-stimulate old patterns of distress and invite a renewed attention to restrictive patterns.”* (ibid: p. 414.)

They point out that this process can often cause the projection of distorted and defensive attitudes on to the research situation and Robin’s ambivalent stance towards the academy could be viewed in this light. But on a more hopeful note they suggest that “if

they (researchers) are prepared and able to use their subjectivity as part of the inquiry process, if they have the skills and support to manage and transcend this re-stimulated distress, the response can be creative and developmental.” (ibid: p. 414.)

Robin’s re-entry into the distress caused by his father’s death when he was eight years old, particularly in Chapter 2 “Growing Up,” is an example, in his view, of this psychotherapeutic aspect of the research process. In this case Robin’s eventual acceptance of his father’s death as an adult, as compared to his earlier acceptance of it as a child through his psychotherapy in the raw-search phase, is a testament to the positive possibility of first-person research for the researcher.

The question that Robin goes on to address in his methodology chapter is “what makes this research?” In what way, is his challenge to himself, is an account of the personal therapeutic or learning process of one individual relevant to a wider academic community? One answer may be in the quality of the learning itself as having some wider significance. But the challenge leads Robin into the territory of writing.

> **Ethno-poetic Account** – the term Robin encountered in Norman Denzin’s book “Interpretative Ethnography” (Denzin, 1997) and modified, he now notices. The chapter he alighted on and is now much marked is entitled “Ethnographic Poetics,” a term Denzin uses to encompass a wide range of experimental works. (Denzin acknowledges the term as coined originally by Marcus and Fisher in 1986).

It seemed to Robin as he read of the way Denzin appreciates such accounts, that Robin might be writing in a territory which was already occupied and, therefore, potentially valid. Except that as he read on and identified himself in the realm of ‘Subjectivist Reflexivity’ all his doubts returned. *“This form of subjectivity has been met with the most criticism, leading to charges of solipsism and narcissism - - - and the complaint that this form of writing dead-ends in the self-indulgences of the writer.”* (Denzin 1997: pp. 217-8 referring to criticisms levelled by Marcus and Wolfe.)

There is a page torn from Robin’s journal marking this chapter. It captures something of the struggle that he has engaged in with locating himself in this territory.

“He turns the page
And back again
Noting here hope

There yet more critique

As pages turn over
Another hopelessness holds sway
An army, it seems
Have marched this way before
All decked out in references
Circular.

Possibilities raised and dashed
Like the sea breaking
(metaphors good!)
hissing up the shore
only to withdraw, leaving
dampness to declare their presence.

It's no good
I can't do this academic stuff
Tracing arguments through the maze
References"

(RL, journal, May 1999)

The poem captures something of Robin's frustration, and difficulty, with an academic form of discourse. It feels to him that an essential idea often gets lost in the maze of references.

In a curious way that aspect of Robin's thesis which is about writing seems now, in retrospect, to be as much associated with writing as a reflective practice as an experiment in presentational form, which is how it started. Or rather the form has increasingly emerged out of the reflexive process, rather than be applied as a presentational sophistication.

A paragraph from Denzin's account, which is much underlined in Robin's copy, reads: "*Ethnopoetics and narratives of the self are messy texts: They always return to the writerly self – a self that spills over into the world being inscribed. This is a writerly self with a particular hubris that is neither insolent nor arrogant. The poetic self is simply willing to put itself on the line and to take risks. These risks are predicated on a simple proposition: This writer's personal experiences are worth sharing with others. Messy texts make the writer a part of the writing project.*" (ibid: p. 225)

But even this statement, which filled Robin with the hope alluded to in his poem and sustained him in his project, refers to the writer as 'part of the writing project – a self that spills over into the world being inscribed.' The assumption is of the writer attempting to convey some aspect of the social space in which he (in this case) resides.

If neither 'ethnopoetics' nor 'messy texts' provide the valid home for Robin's writing which he seeks in his methodological anxiety, what then of "Autoethnography" which has recently seen "*a turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self, while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self experiences occur.*" (Ellis 1996)

The 'outer' in Robin's gaze is less the sociological or cultural aspects of human lives, which seem to be the preserve of ethnography, and more an ecological domain. It may be, therefore, that the field of ethnography is useful as a pointer towards the validity of writing an account in the way that Robin's has developed, rather than providing a ready made home.

Robin's territory is the 'inner' of autobiography and the 'outer' of, let us say, ecology and the overlapping space between which he sees as the imagination. He identifies his search, in the passage quoted from above, for poetic wisdom.

Poetic Wisdom – is "*the first wisdom of the gentile world, (which) must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination*" (Vico 1990: pp. 43-44).

Robin is harking back to an epistemological frame which privileges the sensual over the intellectual, the oral over the literal, an appreciation for mystery over the search for knowledge. The fundamental 'way of knowing' that he is learning to value for himself is 'belief.' This is a way of knowing accessed viscerally. It is a way of knowing hard to

convey in writing. Poetry probably comes closest, as do other art forms such as the visual and musical which he employs.

This is a way of knowing which is hard to validate. Robin's hope is that he will engage you in his learning through the methods that he uses in his presentation which have grown, almost organically it seems, from his reflexive process.

Lucie Marty offers a passionate reflection of this 'other' way of knowing in a piece entitled "To Dance on Knowing Ground." Described as 'post-literate,' Marty states that she has *"never been satisfied with the ability of words to describe experience. Language is not the best tool for passing on vision."* Her article describes her *"lifelong battle on what I call the "knowing ground," the ground of reason, rationality, empiricism, and proof. This battle between intellectualism and "gut feelings," between word and image, between speech and silence, still holds me at bay on the edge of culture. "Other ways of seeing" have been treated as many things in Western culture, from talent to anomaly to delusion. I have come to believe that "seeing" is not a gift for a few but a symptom of being human"* (Marty 1999: pp. 28-31).

Robin often substitutes for the form of learning which offers choice in his estimation, the phrase 'seeing differently.' This implies a shift in perspective which is beyond an awareness, which Robin describes as 'seeing something differently.'

(I am interested to reflect on the emphasis I place on seeing. My sight is limited to one eye as a consequence of such severely limited capability in the other, since childhood, that it has never joined in the looking process. I can see pretty well with one but am conscious of its preciousness. I do not take the gift of sight for granted.

As I was writing my account of learning to hear criticism, which you will find in chapter 2, Growing Up, I became increasingly aware of the gift of hearing, too. I refer in that account to being helped to listen by Donna as we played the tape of a supervision group conversation together. (One of my sources of reflection has been the series of tape recordings made during meetings of my supervision group at the University of Bath during the five years of my research). I meant by that phrase, 'to be helped to listen,' the quality of hearing the words spoken and their intention. But I had just attended a session with an ear specialist at our local hospital to have confirmed my suspicion that I will have to cope with the condition called tinnitus for the remainder of my life. And that the hearing in one

ear is slightly impaired. I listen with considerable gratitude for the power of hearing, as a consequence, and am learning a number of strategies to help limit the intrusion of tinnitus.

I make these points here to emphasise that a significant aspect of my 'learning' over the period of research covered by my thesis is in a bodily form. I have conducted what I call my scholarship, which is head learning, or intellectual to some extent. But much of what I now 'know' is held in my sensual appreciation and in my relationship with the wider world. This is why I am attracted to Vico's notion of 'robust sense and vigorous imagination.'

But this form of learning is difficult to write about, I think. Because it is not 'thought out' so much as experienced. And although I appreciate the notion that experiential knowing may be refined into propositional knowing, as suggested in the Heron and Reason up-hierarchy, I really do not know how I can convey to you the delight with which I view the early morning mist settled in the valley of the estuary, or the cry of an owl early in the evening as I walk into our local wood. For the sight and the sound can be conveyed in word pictures, to some extent. But what I find so difficult to convey is the two-fold knowing which comes from my appreciation that I can see and hear, and the recognition of fellow creatureliness as I do see and hear).

One of the key aspects of Robin's reflexive process has been his use of what he calls 'attentional phrases.'

Attentional Phrases.

The final aspect of his process that Robin suggests you need to appreciate before proceeding further into his account is the significance, in both content and role, of what he calls his attentional phrases.

Earlier in this chapter Robin describes how the phrase A Dialectic Thou 'arrived through an unconscious processing, as though suddenly formed'. In the same way as he subsequently accepted the phrase's emergence through his 'imaginative and cyclic' way of knowing, so too have these attentional phrases assumed an energy and vitality which demands, indeed, attention!

Robin was interested to read of the intensity Marshall experiences in:

"Images, phrases, concepts, and questions around which I organize my sense of inquiring can arise from a variety of sources, but when they "appear" they can have an intensity which makes me recognize them as powerful, or invest them with such power. They have an evocative quality for me, repeatedly catch my attention, and/or are rich phrases (often with ambiguous or multiple meanings) which echo in different areas of my life. They serve as organizing frames for my self-reflection and for taking issues farther conceptually and in practice."

(Marshall 1999: p. 160)

Robin's process for attending to such phrases is described in the next section. There are three such phrases which have been crucial throughout his period of research and remain as 'touchstones' for him of how to live life well.

> **Elegant frugality** – This is a 'how to live my life' phrase which has accompanied and guided Robin through the significant personal and professional changes mentioned earlier in this piece. It is still active in his 'life practice.'

The phrase captures a paradox which is how to live lightly in a material culture. Robin's dynamic response is to try and reduce what he calls his 'footprint,' by which he means his call on natural resources, through a 'frugal' lifestyle. But he also believes in 'the way of beauty' and to the extent that his life can be enhanced by material which is crafted, then he will swing towards the elegant pole.

The earlier reference in this chapter to the Zen notion of 'wabi-sabi' captures for Robin this dynamic combination.

In a way this phrase conjures up Robin's notion that we cannot be frightened into 'giving things up,' but that rather we need to love our way back into a sustainable relationship with our world, and that if we appreciate the world from an artistic perspective we will re-connect with it in humility.

> **Compassionate responsibility** – This second phrase entered Robin's journals during the first year of his research. In the way that he earlier described for the phrase 'a dialectic thou', this phrase seemed to arrive out of his unconscious to find resonance in what he was feeling and expressing at the time. He was particularly exercised by reflections on his own historical sense of responsibility which was somehow determined for

him rather than through choice. The idea of compassionate responsibility captures, for Robin, both an outer sense of service and an inner gentleness.

Robin's journal also includes references he was offered at the time - to Mathew Fox by Judi Marshall and to Bakhtin by Jack Whitehead.

(Robin interjects here in the first person to pay tribute to his sources. Judi Marshall suggested my reading of Mathew Fox, whom I subsequently met at the University of Bath. We had a great conversation about eros and beauty, which comes next. Similarly Jack Whitehead suggested that I might read Bakhtin, alerted by a question he read into in a draft transfer paper, "How do I develop my ability to excite and encourage myself to choose to act out of a compassionate understanding for myself, others and the world I inhabit." Jack's prompt led me to a substitution of the word understanding to the notion of responsibility, as defined by Bakhtin. This was an important moment of 'growing up' as I had until then rejected as constricting what I had felt to be an overwhelming sense of responsibility, which I lay at the door of my early experience as 'responsible' eldest child at the time of my father's death. Bakhtin's notion offered me what feels like a more mature sense of responsibility which accords well with Fox's re-valuing of erotic justice).

Robin found a particular resonance with the way that Mathew Fox sees compassion. *"The key to understanding compassion is to enter into a consciousness of interdependence which is a consciousness of equality of being,"* says Fox. (Fox 1983: p. 279) He goes on to suggest that compassion is a grace rather than a work, but *"compassion - - is not only about waking up to a consciousness of interdependence; it is also about living out interdependence. And those actions fall into two kinds: celebration and justice-making."* (ibid: p. 280)

Fox's view of the passionate celebration required by compassion is akin to Robin's notion of "loving our way into a relation with nature.' In the same way that Fox redeems the word compassion he argues for a re-appreciation of the term erotic: *"To recover the erotic is to recover feeling. - - - Human need is about feelings, feelings of our self-worth; of our cosmic interconnectedness; of our emptiness and pain; of our power to give birth and to be instruments of change and transformation."* (ibid: pp. 281-2) Fox is particularly attracted to the feminist understanding of eros as defined, for example by Ann Ulanov: *"The psychic urge to relate, to join, to be in-the-midst-of, to reach out to, to value, to get in*

touch with, to get involved with concrete feelings, things and people, rather than to abstract or theorize.” (Ulanov 1971 quoted in ibid: p. 282)

But along with celebration, in Fox’s view, is the need to act for social justice, but a justice which is erotic, based in feeling.

In a section which is ‘prophetic’ to the mood in which Robin re-visits Fox’s work for this section just a week after the suicide attacks on New York and Washington, as the world prepares for the USA’s response, Fox notes: *“The pained and suffering victims of injustice need to be touched. It is distance that allows the bomber pilot to drop napalm from 42,000 feet and say he got a kick out of seeing villages go up in flames. Nearness, had he been on the ground to see and smell and touch and look in the eyes of the burnt children and old people, would have transformed him.” (ibid: p. 289)*

An erotic justice, a felt sense of injustice, fuels much of Robin’s despair. Injustice is not an abstraction: it is about the draining away of eros and joy from people’s lives. And while the injustices that the First World heaps on the Third are rather clear (if not ‘seen’ or ‘touched’) then the injustices of patriarchal, market capitalism within the First World also call to Robin’s senses. As do man’s injustice to the natural world.

Which leads into the second element of this attentional phrase, the notion of responsibility.

“To work at all, Bakhtin’s “responsibility” must presume a series of miraculous balances. There must be outsideness but not aloneness; a vulnerable openness to participation but at the same time autonomy and an indifference to critical assault or personal rejection; a full reserve of “aesthetic love” but combined with a willingness to be more lover than beloved. In Bakhtin’s understanding of “response,” I can never demand from another person the specific content I think I need. I can only supplement whatever I have managed to elicit. As Bakhtin would have it, this is the dynamic that governs all fundamental human relations: the link between authors and heroes, the impulse to dialogue, the world’s wisest novels, the most successful lives. Such a notion of answerability is not so much benevolent or naïve – it is neither – as it is exceptionally difficult to live by. Nevertheless, Bakhtin would insist that creative thinking has no other route nor option.” (Emerson 1997: pp. 284-285)

At the time that Robin first met this definition he was learning, in the sense he has named 'growing up,' to practise a 'vulnerable openness,' especially in the way that this is supplemented by 'an indifference to critical assault or personal rejection.' This was an important learning to aid truly listening. But the definition continues to live as an attentional focus for 'response.' It tends to illuminate Robin's anxiety about a focus on action which so often, it seems to him, 'demands from another person the specific content I think I need.' The definition leads Robin back into a consideration for his own response, elicited from his deeper feelings and senses – his poetic wisdom.

>**The Way of Beauty** – this is a phrase that Robin reckons emanates from his participation in the Convivium for Archetypal Studies. (This aspect of his education will be discussed further in the next chapter.)

He started to attend meetings of the Convivium at a time when he was deeply troubled by the way he was living his life and by the wider condition of the world. This was a time of despair.

And he found in the 'soul work' of the Convivium a community which seemed to embrace him and his feelings. The Way of Beauty, as a phrase, spoke to him of his newly discovered feelings, especially those which he ascribed to soul. And he was introduced to artists and their works which resonated with these feelings at a level below or beyond explanation.

Noel Cobb, founder of the Convivium and a regular presenter at these meetings, writes of a similar experience in meeting the work of Edvard Munch. *"And then the colors! Never had I seen such exact formulations of the inner chemistry of suffering, its psychological reality somehow perceived as shapes of living colour – the ghastly grey phosphorescence of despair, the putrid green metal of nausea, the howling reds and the sulphurous yellows of panic, the gall-green poisons of jealousy, the hematite browns and purples of brooding melancholy, blackened reds of congealed hate and the bright scarlet flowering of passion. It was beautiful! Yes, there was something so utterly and fearlessly true, such a beauty, that I found myself, in sheer wonder of being, in this mysterious room of soul pictures, weeping unstoppable tears of gratitude to this strange, inimitable artist."* (Cobb 1992: p. 50)

Robin was similarly grateful for an insight into a world he had somehow imagined but not previously encountered. The Way of Beauty, as an expression of an appreciation

for the soul, has been a fundamental aspect of his subsequent learning. The phrase has taken on, for him, a wealth of meaning which includes his belief in the power of the imagination and a regard for the mystic.

"The experience of true beauty," suggests Cobb, "is an experience of the divine, an experience of God, to use the language of the mystics." And he quotes Corbin: "Here, it should be noted, we are dealing not only with a purely aesthetic pleasure accompanied by a joyful tonality but with the contemplation of human beauty as a numinous, sacred phenomenon which inspires fear and anguish by arousing a movement toward something which at once precedes and transcends the object in which it is manifested, something of what the mystic gains awareness only if he achieves the conjunction, the conspiracy, of the spiritual and the sensory, constitutive of mystic love." (ibid p. 61)

Robin certainly rejects the notion that this mystic or divine experience is subject only to human beauty, as suggested in the Corbin quote, and indeed pursued his interest in the Romantic sensibility towards nature, as expressed by Munch himself: *"Nature is not something that can be seen by the eye alone – it lies also within the soul, in pictures seen by the inner eye . . . The camera will never compete with the brush and the palette, until such times as photographs can be taken in Heaven or Hell."* (Munch quoted in ibid p. 60)

The trajectory of this third phrase and Robin's interpretation of it can be traced through the short article he wrote for GreenSpirit, the journal of the Creation Spirituality movement which appears at chapter 10. In a way the phrase has been supplemented through time by Robin's attraction to the notion of returning the word aesthetic into verb. His phrase which captures this notion is 'living life as art.'

The trajectory referred to here, through the period of learning narrated through this thesis, includes a meeting point between despair and hope, which will be described in the next chapter, and a movement through the spheres of sense, soul and spirit.

The particular arena of Robin's spiritual studies has rested in the Creation Spirituality of Mathew Fox and an interest in the Orthodox inspired by the composer John Tavener. Mathew Fox reports a conversation with the Orthodox theologian, Carolyn Gifford: *"In the orthodox spiritual tradition, the ultimate moral question we ask is the following: Is what we are doing, is what I am doing, beautiful or not?"* (Fox 1983: p. 209)

Beauty, Robin believes, alerts us to our cosmic connections – but not if we so live in our heads that only our heads constitute the cosmos. Kenji Miyazawa advises one "to

discover the galaxy within yourself and remain aware of it" if one wants to be an artist of life.

"What then is the art of living? It is simply this: an expression of cosmic feeling – through the earth and its products, through people and their activities, and through our own individuality. And the way we create is this: Using our emotions and intuitions, we affirm real life all the time, while all the time heightening and deepening our experience of it." (Miyazawa quoted in *ibid*, p. 218)

"Hope reigns," says Mathew Fox, "because beauty is possible." And Robin has been learning, as his thesis testifies, to discover and live this hope.

Attending to attentional phrases.

Robin is suggesting that attention to these phrases has been an important facet of his reflexive methodology. As with other aspects of his process, such as the use of writing as a reflexive method, the value of attentional phrases has emerged as his research has progressed. At an early stage of his writing he introduced the notion of a 'touchstone' – *"a smooth dark mineral, esp. a jasper, used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by rubbing it with the alloy and noting the colour of the mark made"* (OED)

(I choose the material definition rather than the metaphorical one as it conveys something of the way I envisage these attentional phrases. They are alive within me. Somehow I feel them rubbing up against my inner workings, creating moods and responses, often quite physical in their manifestation. My belly and my lungs, especially, are good indicators of whether I am 'in touch' or not).

Judi Marshall advocates the notion that *"Inquiry involves intent, a sense of purpose."* In describing her own process she says: *"Often these days I state overtly that an issue, event, theme, dilemma or whatever is an inquiry for me. This is a deliberate means to keep my questioning open and to help it develop. Doing so heightens my attention inwards and sharpens my external testing of developing ideas and of my own inquiry in action. It gives me a frame for noting my ever-provisional sense-making as I proceed, articulating it – to self and others – as part of the process of inquiry. I use such practices*

to guide and support me in living my life as inquiry as well as to study 'topics' as an academic researcher." (Marshall 2001: p. 435).

Robin uses his 'attentional phrases' as overt guidance in a similar way. The phrases seem to occupy the overlapping territory between inner and outer awarenesses, the 'theatre of contention' between inner intents and outer actions. Each phrase contains its own complexity and part of the process of inquiry has been to expand and develop the meaning conveyed in the phrase. (In this sense the notion of a stone serves ill as metaphor, for the touchstone itself transforms as the inquiry proceeds.)

Robin has found the process of journalling, which he has maintained since his training in psychotherapy, particularly enriched by these phrases. They provide a quality of focus which shifts from phrase to phrase over time, but have gained some kind of authority within this medium, almost as Guardians of the Journal. Sitting down to relate and comment on the day's experience, Robin has often found himself confronted by the current phrase, almost demanding attention and certainly inducing a further degree of reflection.

In a similar way the writing of progressive versions of the Dialectic Thou has shifted the meaning Robin makes of the phrase, which has taken on some of that similar sense of guidance for his thesis as a whole. He would like to end with a return to the word 'dialectic' which he now sees differently than in the opening lines. He reported the resonance of dialectic, at that opening time, as holding the poles of explanation and expression in relation, or communication, to one another. This was a 'comfortable' reflection of Robin's way of seeing in dichotomy. The term, at this closing stage of revision, takes on a more challenging aspect.

A REFLECTION ON DIALECTIC.

There is a curious quality in the term, it seems to him, which conveys both pulling apart, or separating, and uniting. The OED's second definition contains both of these aspects: "*The philosophy of metaphysical contradictions and their solutions, esp. in the thought of Kant and Hegel; the world process seen as a continuing unification of opposites; the existence or action of opposing forces or tendencies in society etc.*"

In writing this piece, referring back to texts which inspired mentions in his journals, Robin leaves with a new, or renewed commitment towards unification rather than

separation. As an attentional phrase, a dialectic thou will induce in Robin an attention towards his propensity to see the world, especially the human aspect of the world, composed in dichotomies, as opposites or contradictions.

Novalis said:

And when light and darkness mate

Once more and make something entirely transparent,

Then our entire twisted nature will turn

And run when a single secret word is spoken.

(quoted in Fox 1983: p. 209)

The secret word for Robin is beauty. And as he continues to focus his attention on the meaning of beauty, or the meaning beauty makes, he increasingly associates harmony as an essential element in its dialectic sense. "A dialectical consciousness is essential for the way we begin to see the world and ourselves as integral to it," argues Fox. (ibid, p211)

But these suggestive terms - harmony, unification, integration - are to be held lightly as enablers rather than acted on forcefully to seek closure or consensus. Resolution in the beautiful is an appreciation of difference, a delight in the paradoxical.

Robin is reminded of the power of soul as the well spring of beauty as he discovered it in despairing moments. Beauty, as Robin would now wish to live it, is fully aware of and encompasses both despair and hope.

A final turn, for this chapter anyway, of Robin's journals at the time he was trying to fathom soul, reveals this passage from "Soul Mates," by Thomas Moore:

"The soul of relationship doesn't ask for the "right" ways of acting; it wants something even more difficult – respect for its autonomy and mystery. The soulful relationship asks to be honored for what it is, not for what we wish it could be. It has little to do with our intentions, expectations, and moral requirements. It has the potential to lead us into the mysteries that expand our hearts and transform our thoughts, but it can't do that when our primary interest is in pursuing our cherished ideologies. The point in a relationship is not to make us feel good, but to lead us into a profound alchemy of soul that reveals to us many of the pathways and openings that are the geography of our own destiny and potentiality." (Moore 1994: pp. 256-7)

Robin is learning to live in a soulful relationship with the world, which may sound grand but is infused, as he grows up, with a profound sense of mystery which induces a true humility. He hopes that his thesis will offer you some sense of the openings and pathways that he has explored through his inquiry. And he hopes that he might, through his choice of words, open your heart a little and transform your thoughts somewhat.

INTERLUDE 1 – DESPAIR AND HOPE

In this opening Interlude, as advertised in my Preface, I want to explain my inclusion of artistic images and pieces of music in general, as well as the particular images by Turner which act as the entry into my first section.

As a potential writer I am profoundly aware of the limitations of writing, particularly and especially 'prose' writing. In order to write out what I want to say I have to create a linear, progressive form in which one idea follows, or precedes, another. I have to try and be clear and precise, searching for the right words and their combinations which 'make sense' to the reader. This is about trying to convey an understanding which we can share, to some degree, you, the reader and me, the writer.

But what I want to convey is not like that. The way I live my life, conduct my praxis, see the world, is not full of linear understanding. It is convoluted, complex, full of loops and spirals, partially realised and explicit. The writing 'makes sense', maybe, in a way which is certainly helpful to me and is a significant part of my process or method. But I hope to convey something of the quality of the knowing in the quality of the writing, especially its misty, mysterious, delightful quality.

I have often turned to poetry, both the writing and the reading of it to appreciate a form of writing which makes, for me, more sense, even if it is difficult to 'understand.' There is a density possible in poetic construction which gets drawn out and rendered thin in linear narrative form. I indicated my appreciation for the notion of 'poetic wisdom' in the Dialectic Thou, a sensory knowing which can be conveyed in the more complex forms of poetry.

Ted Hughes describes, for me, something of the poetic art in pursuit of wisdom in his essay on Popa:

"His poems are trying to find out what does exist, and what the conditions really are. The movement of his verse is part of his method of investigation something fearfully apprehended, fearfully discovered, but he will not be frightened into awe. He never loses his deeply ingrained humour and irony: that is his way of hanging on to his human wholeness. And he never loses his intense absorption in what he is talking about, either. His words test their way forward, sensitive to their own errors, dramatically and intimately alive, like the antennae of some rock-shore creature feeling out the presence of the sea and the huge

powers in it. This analogy is not so random. There is a primitive pre-creation atmosphere about his work, as if he were present where all the dynamisms and formulae were ready and charged, but nothing created – or only a few fragments . . . (There is an) air of trial and error exploration, of an improvised language, the attempt to get near something for which he is almost having to invent the words in a total disregard for poetry or the normal convention of discourse.”

(Hughes 1994: pp.223, 226)

It seems to me that Hughes could as easily be describing his own work. It seems to me, too, that Hughes's stature is increasingly assured amongst the greatest of English poets as his death gives us more distance on his life. I have a sense of his imaginal presence north from where I am writing, maintaining in his body of work, now that his body is gone, the Romantic tradition honouring our intimate enfolding in the natural world.

I include images and music as well as poems. For even poetry is laid down in sequential words. There is a way of knowing which is complete in itself, holistic one might say, which can best be conveyed for me in image. This is again an example of my valuing of 'seeing,' as discussed in a commentary in the Dialectic Thou. I can 'see' in an image the possibility of knowing in what I think of as an archetypal dimension.

And music, although heard as a form of narrative, linear in its progression, conveys for me a depth of knowing in this same archetypal domain. When my flesh 'creeps' in response to a musical phrase I sense my connection, through the performers and composer, to a primitive way of being. For me, this is beyond knowing. It is a direct, in those occasional moments, evidence of being alive and a part of all living creatures.

I am happy, often, to gaze at an artwork in silence or listen to music with gaze unfocused. But sometimes I like to enjoin the musical and imagistic processes.

I started to adopt, in my teaching practice, the inclusion of images and music with presentation and discussion some time into the period I describe as 'raw-searching' (of which more in Chapter 1). This was either initiated or confirmed by the way Eva Loewe and Noel Cobb presented their lectures to the Convivium of Archetypal Psychology. In their case this was natural as they were discussing art works, especially visual art and poems. But I was inspired by a sense of deeper knowing induced by such a combination. I have been working, in the intervening period, to find ways of presenting such material with enough 'explanation' to make them accessible but trying to avoid any suggestion that there is a particular 'interpretation' that I am after.

These Interludes are my attempt to offer that sufficiency of framing in my thesis.

Eva Loewe describes the quality of combination:-

"Paired with a certain piece of music one sees more deeply into an image and glimpses realities that one might have missed. I was very struck by the beauty of a marble head of Venus in the National Museum of Athens - you know, the one with the cross gouged into the forehead. I was, of course, disturbed by the defacing, but the beauty of her face was stronger than the wound in her brow. Much later, at home in London when I was putting the show together, I happened to place this Venus head with a particular slow movement from a Haydn string quartet. Suddenly I became aware that the music was like an elegy, a very poignant lament, and I understood the pathos in this 'de-formed' image: that the sculpture had been attacked by Christians who could not tolerate its sensual, pagan beauty and had to 'purify' it by chiselling that barbaric cross in the forehead and another in the chin. There is a kind of melancholy in this."

(Eva Loewe as reported by Noel Cobb in Sphinx 6: p. 20)

Noel comments on *"the epistemological value of music in a truly Orphic and Ficinian manner"* as represented by this example.

I would like to make one more general comment here before I describe my encounters with Despair and Hope. I am suspicious that our written literacy has had a deeply alienating effect, separating us from and allowing us to assume dominion over the rest of the natural world. I was very struck by David Abram's argument, in his marvelous book *"The Spell of the Sensuous,"* that our fall from grace emanates from the invention of vowels which made possible a consistent written record. Up until then reading was always lively in the sense of spontaneously interpretative, as the reader had to 'make up' the way the text flows.

In a passage contained in his chapter entitled *"Animism and the Alphabet,"* Abram quotes from Plato's *"Phaedrus."* Against Thoth's claim that writing will make people wiser and improve their memory, the Egyptian king asserts that the very opposite is the case:

"If men learn this (writing), it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks."

(Phaedrus quoted in Abrams 1996: p. 113.)

Abrams continues, *“moreover – according to the king – spoken teachings, once written down, easily find their way into the hands of those who will misunderstand those teachings while nevertheless thinking that they understand them. Thus, the written letters bring not wisdom but only “the conceit of wisdom,” making men seem to know much when in fact they know little.”* (ibid)

Enough, I think, of the general introduction of my inclusion of images and music. Let me turn to the particular images I have selected to act as a ‘doorway’ into my first section, which is essentially an autobiographical inquiry.

Despair and Hope.

On many occasions during the period prior to my re-search, which I call my time of raw-search, I sat before a particular image of Turner’s in the Clore Gallery at the Tate (now the Tate Britain).

This is the first image in the pair you should now have before you, “Sunrise, a Castle on a Bay: “Solitude” c1840-5.”

I used to sit and stare at the space beyond the rise in the ground between the trees. I could feel my resistance to walking the path I could discern to that place, for all I could imagine beyond was the void. This was an image of my despair. I felt in the absence beyond the horizon my own sense of hopelessness. My life, it seemed, lacked meaning.

At some magical moment, a transitional moment when I entered this subsequent period of re-searching, I returned to the Clore to find ‘Solitude’ (or ‘Despair’ as I will often refer to this painting) re-hung. And alongside it now, on a wall to themselves I saw “Sunrise, with a Boat between Headlands,” from the same period.

I noticed the change in colour, from sombre brown to blue, an alchemical dissolving. And I could see the sun, clearly, rising in Hope (as I will often refer to this second image.)

If you place these two images alongside one another, as they were hung in the gallery and as they hang, in miniature versions, on my den wall, then I invite you to imagine a bridge between them. I will describe my process of constructing such an imaginal bridge in chapter 1, From Raw-Search to Re-Search.

Music.

I want to play you a piece of music which has become a bit of a 'trade-mark' of mine on the AMOC programme. This is the song "Enlightenment" by Van Morrison. The words go:-

"Chop that wood
Carry water
What's the sound of one hand clapping
Enlightenment don't know what it is

Every second, every minute
It keeps changing to something different
Enlightenment don't know what it is
Enlightenment don't know what it is
It says it's non attachment
Non attachment, non attachment

I'm in the here and now, and I'm meditating
And I'm still suffering, but that's my problem
Enlightenment don't know what it is

Wake up

Enlightenment says the world is nothing
Nothing but a dream, everything's an illusion
And nothing is real

Good or bad baby
You can change it any way you want
You can rearrange it
Enlightenment don't know what it is
Chop that wood

And carry water
What's the sound of one hand clapping
Enlightenment don't know what it is

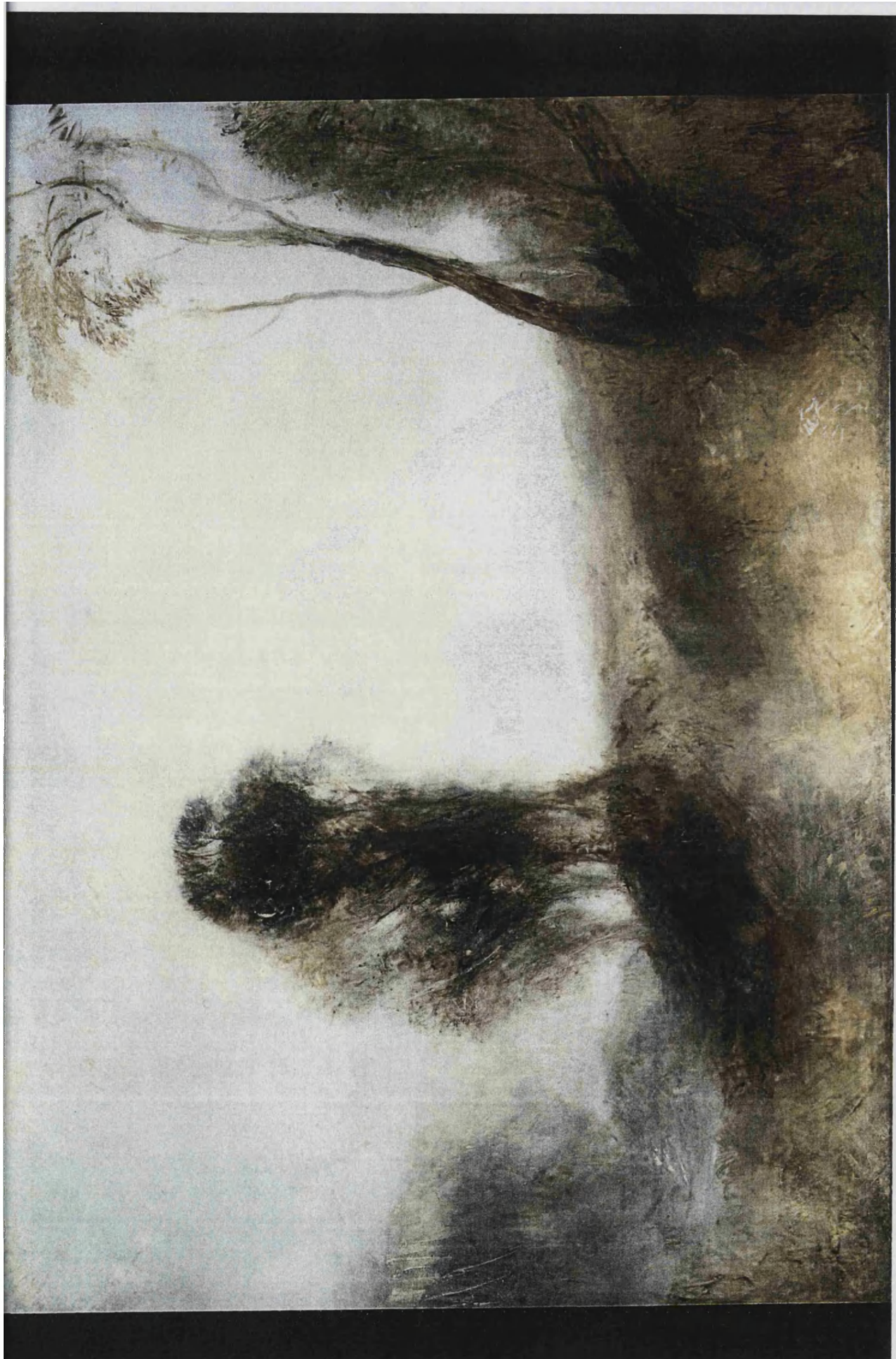
All around baby, you can see
You're making your own reality, everyday because
Enlightenment don't know what it is

One more time

Enlightenment don't know what it is
It's up to you
Enlightenment don't know what it is
It's up to you everyday
Enlightenment don't know what it is
It's always up to you
Enlightenment don't know what it is
It's up to you, the way you think.

Van Morrison for Caledonian Productions Ltd

It seems to say it all, really!







Wolf Kahn 33



SECTION 1

WHO I AM BECOMING

.....

DIALECTIC THOU - FROM RAW-SEARCH TO RE-SEARCH.

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Framing.

Robin 'opens' his account with an autobiographical section separated into two chapters. (The term 'open' is intended to indicate, here, Robin's first person account, as compared to the subsequent third person reflections which have largely occupied the Introductory Section.)

Robin's choice to open in this way, with autobiographical material, can now be explained as a deliberate act symbolically representing the fruits of his first person living inquiry. Distance, temporal in this case, can offer a post-rationalisation which converts a seemingly random decision into a deliberate act. But, presumably, the initial decision was not so random at an unconscious level and the subsequent conversion into deliberation includes a good deal of further inquiry into and validation of his inquiry process.

The writing of what is now the 'opening' chapter, From Raw-search to Re-Search in January 1999, seemed to mark a turning point in Robin's appreciation for what, at some new level, his research was 'about.' It had taken an 'inward' turn.

(This does not 'feel' accurate, either, or at least not complete, as a description. My recollection is, as reflected in my journal entries over the Christmas holiday of 1998, that I decided to honour my own inner reflective practice at that time. I seriously questioned whether to continue with a research process which felt quite onerous in its demands on my time and which raised for me again my historical feelings of inadequacy faced with 'academic' expectations. I will return to this personal issue of confidence in the second chapter, Growing Up. The choice I made at this time, January 1999, was to pursue my research 'my way', which was thoroughly endorsed, by the way, by my supervisor. The 'academic monsters' were of my own making).

One aspect of this re-start was the emergence of the structure that Robin's thesis now follows. What had felt like a potentially indulgent process of internal inquiry fell into place as a necessary 'ingredient' for an integral process of learning to practise as teacher. The structure which appears in linear form in the way that his thesis is set out and in cyclic

form in the 'bumpy wheel' diagram, emerged 'from the back', as it were. Once Robin focused his attention on what he 'did' as a teacher, or rather the underlying basis of his practice, he noticed that 'what he does' depends on 'what he knows' and 'who he is'.

Hence the form of his thesis:-

- > Who I am
- > What I know
- > What I do.

Robin's autobiographical inquiry thus became legitimised, in his own eyes, by the necessary quality of self-awareness he recognised he brought into his practice. Much of Robin's account of his research is material written after this re-starting along with reflective revisions. His first drafts often return to material written prior to January 1999 and re-interpret them in the light of this learning sequence or structure.

(The inclusion of the fourth element of Robin's inquiry, How I Learn, will be further explained in the Dialectic Thou to Section 2).

Purpose of chapter 1 – From Raw-search to Re-search.

This chapter retains some purely descriptive purpose. Robin assumes that his reader needs a little more information about his life during the period of his research to help make sense of the learning to which he is relating. The information included in the chapter is intended to supplement and enrich the brief biographical section in the opening Dialectic Thou.

The second purpose that the chapter addresses is the notion of “Research as Personal Process.” This is the title of a chapter written by Peter Reason and Judi Marshall in 1987. (Marshall and Reason 1987: ch. 9) In it they comment on their experience of supervising graduate researchers: *“The motivation to do research is personal and often expresses needs for personal development, change and learning. So we must look at academic research as an educative process, and at the enormous potential it holds for personal growth.”* (ibid: p.112)

This first chapter records Robin's deliberate transition out of a period he names as 'raw-search' into a more considered and systematic period of 're-search', supported by the framework of the CARPP process.

Robin's psychotherapeutic experience has led him to conjecture that a period of awareness with this 'raw' quality is probably necessary for the kind of learning often termed as 'second-order,' or transformational. The roaring ache, to play on words, is a precursor to, an energiser of, the kind of shift that Robin is describing.

The process of reflection, through writing, is also addressed in this chapter. Robin suggests that through the cycle of reflection associated with the writing and re-writing of the chapter he has 'distanced' his practising self from his raw-feeling self. He has been decreasingly caught or determined by those aspects of himself he has been inquiring into, less constrained and more choiceful. Robin is suggesting that his reflective practice has raised his awareness of why he reacts or behaves in 'patterned' ways as a first level of learning. This first, inner reflection, seems to have the quality of removing the energy from the previous pattern and to make other choices possible. He can now 'see' or 'hear' differently, terms with which you will become increasingly familiar as Robin's account unfolds.

This first cycle has the quality of 'grounding' he associates with a lightning conductor. The 'charge' previously held within the pattern is safely 'conducted' to ground.

The second and subsequent cycles of the bumpy wheel, what Robin now thinks of as 'revisionary reflection', gradually 'externalises' his learning. This is often achieved in the initial stages through reading, much of which makes more sense second or third time round. Robin will then increasingly 'test out' alternative ways of being and saying as the combination of his grounded self-awareness and 'knowledge' combine in his practice.

You, as reader of his thesis, are a recipient of this externalising phenomenon as are his clients.

It is in this way that Robin sees his research as stretching out of the bounds of the purely personal into a relation with others, through his praxis.

Process of chapter 1 - From Raw-search to Re-Search.

Robin has attempted to retain in the revisions of this chapter something of that energetic shift he describes above as 'grounding'. He experiences the quality of writing associated with the first turn of the wheel, awareness raising, as condensed, elliptical, allusive. This is not necessarily easy material for an other to read with any great degree of

clarity. It could be described as 'poetic narrative' in that it has the poetic quality referred to in the Preface of evoking what cannot be articulated.

The subsequent process of revision is associated with the second and subsequent cycles of learning which increasingly articulate, for an 'external' audience, the sense that Robin is making of his experience.

(Once again, this process of initial and subsequent stages of learning, from inner towards outer, is much easier to describe at a distance, on further reflection, than it was at earlier stages of writing. It would be wonderful to be able to capture each of these aspects at different stages of revision and lay it all out neatly on the page. But the pages were not assembled with that neat quality of understanding. The process of revision itself led me, in a fumbling kind of way, to this present 'proposition').

Hopefully you will see in subsequent chapters examples of these different qualities of writing. Normally 'first draft' or 'first cycle' writings are identified by indented sections and subsequent revisions by 'normal' margins. However, in this opening chapter Robin has tried to retain the quality of 'grounding' reflection throughout, with occasional process comments as points of contact or guidance. The 'grounding' associated with the chapter is Robin's acceptance of the significance of his research about and for himself.

CHAPTER 1

FROM RAW-SEARCH TO RE-SEARCH

First draft: January 1999

Second draft: April 2000

Third draft: December 2000

Fourth draft: October 2001

Fifth draft: May 2002

A Path Between Hope and Despair.

I invite you to step through a gateway between Hope and Despair and to enter, in some way, my version of the world.

Rilke's poem, "Now is the Time", with which I opened my thesis, is a request to pause.

I noted in my journal, when I first encountered it in 1992:-

"An Awakening – does not the aesthetic, the moment of beauty, lead us to pause, literally to draw in the breath, to gasp for air? Rilke arrests me and wakes me up. I stand at the threshold, I pause in the opening, taking in the possibility that the void I had imagined is inside me. If I choose to look differently, at this moment, the world itself could be different – "the world itself arises with you, and new life gleams / in all the fractured places of your failures." (RL, journals, April 1992)

Captured in those two lines is something of the essence of my story, my version of the life I see myself leading. New life gleams out of fracture and failure. The way through the images of Hope and Despair, I have noticed, is to hold the both in a lively paradox.

(As indicated in the Dialectic Thou to this chapter I am consciously maintaining a style of writing, especially in these opening pages, which is 'authentic' in the sense of original. This is, I feel, my natural way of communicating. And when I am communicating in this way, trying to express how I feel in a fundamental way, I turn to visual images, pieces of music and poems as a means to penetrate or capture my 'emotional knowing.' I notice that when I turn up my journal entries at a particular moment of 'seeing,' my writing is condensed, as the example above demonstrates. This

quality is suggestive, for me, of the kind of knowing that I am trying to convey here – it is rich, multi-layered and rather opaque. It is as though some essential ‘truth,’ if I can use that word here, is conveyed in the complexity. My sense is that if I try to clean it up, clarify it, explain it too soon its essential essence will disappear.

As my subsequent reflections have suggested, this attempt to penetrate to some fundamental, emotional level of my pre-knowing, dredges to the surface not only a new sense of understanding or awareness but also releases some of the ‘patterned energy’ associated with it archaic learning. I think of this as a kind of alchemical process, dredging up, separating out - a clearing process.

‘To hold the both in a lively paradox’ is such a simple phrase to tap out on my key board. It is the sort of phrase I can hear myself offering to clients, advocating the notion of living with complexity or ambiguity. But the reality for me is not in the simple phrase. Holding paradox is not a matter of injunction or advocacy. My experience is of approaching the two pictures, Hope and Despair, of hearing Rilke’s poem in my head, and of sensing the possibility of suspending myself in a state in which I don’t have to collapse, one way or the other.

My transition from the condition I describe as raw-searching towards the more refined re-searching is characterised by the discovery that I can suspend myself, for a while, in ambiguity).

The gateway through which we step, if you have agreed to join with me on this imaginary path, opens out on to a bridge. This is the kind of imaginary turn dreams often provide. There is no rational or perceptual logic, but the metaphorical image changes. Form changes and offers a new perspective. I do not really know what the limitations of the metaphorical gateway were, but an image of a bridge has opened out, for me, a new range of possibilities with which to ‘see’ this notion of suspension I am exploring, in this present case suspended between Despair and Hope. To clarify the image further it is a suspension bridge, I imagine, that supports me in a state of ambiguity.

(This is clumsy, the duplication of the two metaphorical images of gateway and bridge so closely coupled. But that was my ‘truth’. I had, initially, a strong wish to ‘impose’ a gateway and a path into my ‘story’. The gateway I had in mind is an image by Winifred Nicholson and the path the ‘path less traveled’ by Robert Frost. But my emergent ‘truth’ is that of bridge).

A Bridge Between Despair and Hope.

When I first set out on this voyage I call re-search I imagined that I would be completing it as “writer.” I have always, it seems, wanted to be a writer. I believe that it is my particular talent and calling. And yet I consistently divert myself from pursuing writing as a primary activity. Even this time that I have spent researching could be seen as another diversion.

For I love writing, the excitement of first trying to capture ideas and emotions which speak to me, fresh and clear, gleaming like fruit just picked off the bough, still damp with the morning dew.

As I have indicated in the Preface, writing is a crucial part of my method, my learning process. As I walk, especially, words write themselves in my head. They form constellations, sentences, which make sense. They are very specific, these words, precise, and they relate one to another in a way which is pleasing, aesthetically satisfying. In my head, as I walk, they speak to me of meanings in their relatedness. And my job, when I get back home and into my den, my writing space, is to try and record them as precisely as possible as they came to me.

But what I have had to learn over this period of preparing papers for my research community is to return to those early, dew dripping fruit, and to re-arrange them into constellations which might make sense to others, too. I still suffer with this craft aspect of writing, much preferring to start anew.

(Indeed, I am suffering at this very moment. Having disciplined myself to a session of editing and revising a document already well worn, as it were, I cannot resist the temptation to try a new line of thinking, a different form of expression. But as I said in my Preface, this is my reflexive process in action, for each new thought or form represents the possibility of learning.

I am, right now, revising an aside I wrote while revising this chapter last time. In the process, by really trying to focus on what it is I need to say to you, I am re-discovering the depth of my yearning and frustration about “being a writer.” It lay below the words I had previously written, captured in the phrase “I have always, it seems, wanted to be a writer.” Always goes back to my childhood. I’m really not sure, now, when or whether I ever declared to myself that I wanted to write – for a living, at least. But I ‘wrote’ all the time, in my head. I was constantly describing to myself, it seems, the world as I observed it and the way I observed my own participation in it. Actually becoming writer still feels as though it is my challenge.

But as I work again at this passage I notice that it speaks to me at three levels. One is the yearning to be writer, a question of praxis. Another is the craft aspect of trying to present, as faithfully as possible, the purity of my walking thought, the outer expression of presentational knowing. The third is the sense of knowing which 'goes on' in my head, especially when I am attuned to the rhythm of walking and my senses are alive. This is the inner aspect, for me, of presentational knowing. It feels as though knowing channels through me. I try to capture this way of knowing in the phrase 'poetic wisdom' in the second chapter).

I set out again to finish. As I enter a fourth revision I feel a sense of determination tinged with despair that I shall ever get through this process to a satisfactory completion. And yet I know that I will have written, in the full sense of that word – I will have conjured the words from out of my head, committed them to print, modified and massaged them until I am ready to say that I have finished.

I will not be a writer, though, for that holds a different meaning for me. I will be suspended, in a state of ambiguity, in which I will have chosen to maintain my challenge to become a writer and yet be satisfied for the moment that I will have written as a researcher and a teacher.

The metaphor of the bridge, which I first used during the opening CARPP workshop in January 1996, has remained with me. It was initially a bridge to cross, from one world to another. (At that time, in January 1996, from the world of management consultancy to the world of writing.) It became a bridge which joined together, an integrating image, a way of maintaining a link between worlds. And as it held, for instance, those worlds I previously saw as incommensurable, the world of organisation and the world of nature, so too did I discover that I could be both consultant and writer, and maybe in the suspended state, teacher.

This vision or image which represents my way of 'seeing' my story continues to hold a powerful fascination. On a further visit to the Clore wing at the Tate Britain in December 2000, when I started work on my third draft, I found my two Turner images re-hung, yet again, in a new section of the gallery. And with a start of joy I saw that they were joined (or separated, I suppose) by a third image. And the image was of a bridge!

But I wonder at the solidity of the structure in Turner's image. My bridge feels more like the famous / infamous pedestrian bridge constructed for the Millennium to lead to the other Tate, the Tate Modern on the South Bank. Most elegantly designed, an

architectural and aesthetic delight, the engineering let it down. It remained un-useable and under considerable re-construction for some time. As I work on my fourth revision I feel something of the same sense of re-construction pending. It is as though another turn of the 'bumpy learning wheel' is dislodging me into a new confusion. But eventually the Millenium Bridge was re-opened in a newly, fully dampened state. I wonder at the felicity of this extended image, the damping effect of further revisions leading me towards a newly grounded satisfaction with the practice of teaching in a world which remains ambiguous.

(I am once again concerned at this point that I am not doing well at explaining myself as I go – that much of this may seem elliptical, condensed, fragmentary. I know I have tried to justify these qualities in my writing in the Preface, but nevertheless I was expecting to be clearer than this. I had a feeling that the Dialectic Thou had established a solid foundation for this (fourth) revision and that I could proceed with some ease through the ensuing chapters.

But I am aware of an unease which is rendering some of the clarity and completeness I was anticipating into an opaque state. Actually the shaking bridge is a good metaphor for how I presently (in October 2001) feel. It feels to me now, as I re-visit and re-visit, one more time, my account of the period of my research, that the outcome I have been describing, this state of suspension on my metaphorically constructed bridge, is shaky. The bridge itself, the structure I have created by way of explanation, is potentially unsafe.

This is an obvious problem with a living inquiry – living goes on. It does not make a convenient stop, a moment of completion. Complete I must, though, for in the act of completion, I feel, is the possibility of the next stage in my learning. I know that this will mean confronting, once again, my declared intention to become a writer.

But there is another force at work disturbing the bridge. It feels as though my carefully constructed integration between worlds I held apart in my raw state of despair is liable to collapse. My feeling is that I have found some degree of comfort in the life choices I made in the transition I am describing in this chapter, from a raw-searching state to a re-searching state. But the world is intruding again. And I sense the need for some further adjustments in the way I choose to conduct myself in the world as a response to new levels of anxiety.

But I must beware starting again! I will continue to make occasional comments on my present, as in the final revision of autumn 2001, state of suspension between Despair and Hope, but the main text will continue to represent a period in which the bridge metaphor was constructed and holding.

And as I 'now' (in April 2002) revise, once again,, it feels to me as though the bridge is settling into a new state of solidity. The role and practice of teacher, or educator as I re-name it, acts as a genuine integrator between the consultant I now (if temporarily) choose to remain and the writer I still wish to become. I will return to this latest state of clarity in my Epilogue.

But do you see how this writing and revision process, particularly referring to my metaphorical images (and their material counterparts), cycles through succeeding stages of meaning making and releases energy from archaically patterned despair into hopeful choice?)

My intention remains, despite subsequent revisionary clarifications, to present my account of two periods of inquiry. The more recent period I call my Re-Search, chronologically from January 1996 until the present, May 2002. This is the time that I have been working within the framework of the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath.

The prior period I label as Raw-Search. I date this from roughly October 1988 to April 1995. The dates signify particular events, life changing moments. As you might notice much happens, for me, in the Spring time of April/May!

Research

As I indicated earlier, I see my thesis as reflecting a particular period of personal re-search, a period in which I have focused systematic attention on a phase in my life which I now see, looking back across the bridge from where I now stand, as a growing into my third age.

And as the subject of my research is so essentially autobiographical, I feel you should have some more data to help you place the various episodes I choose to include as significant to my inquiry.

My personal inquiry is set in a wider context. This is a particular period of our history, ("our" referring to what we might deem 'Western culture'). I have been

pursuing a notion through what I think of as my 'scholarship,' that we are engaged in a period of transformation.

I have been trying to make sense, then, of a phase of personal growing up in conjunction with trying to confirm my hope, which is that there are signs of some new possibilities in the way that "we" think about ourselves and our world.

When I refer to "growing up" and "growing into my third age" I am conscious of the possibility that this sounds like reaching some kind of end-point, of being "grown-up", a claim that immediately requires justification or evidence. How do I know, for instance, that I will not feel even more "grown-up" in another few years time and look back on my present state, as represented by this document for example, as naïve or adolescent? Of course I hope to continue to develop, to learn – but nevertheless I feel like making this claim, that this thesis represents the history of a period of accelerated learning. I feel that I have learned how to be me in the world, with a combination, somehow, of pride and humility, each in its appropriate proportion.

During this time of re-search I have been much supported by the staged process adopted by the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath. Indeed I have been much supported by the whole idea that it is possible to research through a process of active inquiry into one's practice, registered as a PhD student. The programme at Bath requires the writing of two papers, a Diploma transfer paper and an MPhil transfer paper, which qualify one to continued registration for a PhD.

As I now come to try and pull together my 'thesis', which somehow suggests a finished document, I reflect back on those earlier papers as ways of trying to express what I know and how I know it. This inter-relation between my ontology and epistemology is fundamental to my research as they weave together, sometimes the how preceding the what, at others reversing again

Another important element for me of the CARPP programme has been working within a supervision group up until this final, writing up stage. I have acknowledged (in the opening pages) especially the support, encouragement and challenge I have received over this period from my supervisor, Professor Judi Marshall and my fellow researchers in the regular sessions of our supervision group. These have provided me with a continuity of reflections on my writings and their context in my life and practice. Indeed, I reckon that these meetings have constituted an important element in my

method. I have been held to account for my claimed learning and challenged about my practice and its relevance to my aspirations.

The tape recordings I have kept of these sessions provide a significant source of data and enable me to track my thinking over this period. They also convey a sense of my feelings towards my work, its place in my life and my research.

(I am reflecting here on how strands of the research programme, as it is constructed in CARPP, have supported me and held me to account. This systematic process has provided a framework in which my thinking and my feeling have been channeled through my writing. Although I kept a journal through the prior period I will come on to describe in a moment, this more public writing has shifted the quality of my learning. The requirement to 'explain' myself has forced me to make sense of my experience in a way which is accessible to others.

And this has encouraged me to be more prepared to teach).

I want to return to the metaphor of the bridge. For as well as seeing a bridge between Hope and Despair in my personal inquiry, I have been building a bridge between me and others. I have been constructing a way of seeing the world, from outer to inner, as it were. But I have also been expressing more of my inner to the outer world as represented by clients, colleagues and participants. (And friends and family, too.)

Research as Bridge Building.

The metaphor of the bridge arose as I first entered the programme at Bath. I remember that as we introduced ourselves to each other I described my sense of being, at Bath, physically suspended on the road between Milton Keynes, which is where I then lived, and Kingsbridge in Devon, which is now my home. It was almost as though Bath was a convenient stopping place, which indeed in the journey by car it is. But the journey had a metaphorical aspect, which was the sense of learning to leave a world in which I had lived and worked to take up a new phase and aspect of my life. In my Diploma paper I wrote: "This is about me as writer, choosing to find the time to write and, in the meantime, learning how I relate to the world as writer. In particular this is about how I relate to the world I am leaving, the world of organisation and management, the dominant culture of the wide world in which I now need to find a different place, a new relation."

The bridge had other aspects which I had, by the time I came to write that first Diploma paper, discovered in a fellow researcher's work. Jill Treseder called her PhD thesis "Bridging Incommensurable Paradigms." (University of Bath, 1995). I was captivated by her title and thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to share her struggle through the pages of a thesis which inspired me at an early stage in my research. For I had a clear sense of distinct paradigms, competing world views, in the world I inhabited. I was also aware of them in myself and had, in a way, already been working on some sense of resolution through my therapeutic practice, of which more later in this chapter. It felt as though my re-search was taking this task on to a new plane.

"I want to build bridges across the divides we have, at some stage in our development, created. - - - - This is a document intended to record the process of reparation, of healing", I wrote early on (RGL Diploma paper p2). In the margin I have a comment from Judi Marshall, my supervisor, which will resonate, I hope, as I develop my thesis, "Berman - coming to our senses?" Indeed, I could see this as an alternative title: 'Learning to lead my life well - coming to my senses.'

The phrase "coming to my senses" has many resonances. It is like a major chord being struck on a piano, there are many notes creating the whole sound picture.

One aspect is the simple sense of sensing – of hearing and feeling and tasting and seeing. Especially of touching, I think, as I scan my new confidence, of trusting and valuing my senses. My body has a way of knowing.

And it has an inner knowing as well as the outer manifestation of sensory data. I refer increasingly to my gut and my heart and my back and my shoulders – all good sources of information.

And it has an older knowing, a wiser knowing. My senses, inner and outer, alert me to my place in the world with a humble and profound knowing of my inter-relatedness and dependence.

I think that my process of learning to come to my senses may have resonance for others. This is an aspect of my pride in being myself that leads me to write this account – an account of learning. And I choose to do so in the form of a PhD account, which suggests some notion of transferability.

(I struggle with the word 'pride' but can find no other more suitable. It is a difficult word to use as it is so easily acquainted with 'arrogance.' The OED includes as a definition "*arrogant or overbearing conduct, demeanour - - arrogance, haughtiness*" It is this definition I recently heard Mathew Fox, founder of Creation Spirituality,

describe as the problem, especially as in the 'hubris' of 'modern man.' But he related pride with esteem, as in an alternative definition "*a consciousness of what befits - - or is worthy of oneself; self-respect.*" It is in this sense that I choose to use the word 'pride', often coupled with humility, for as Mathew Fox went on to suggest that this is to see oneself as blessed. Not chosen, especially, but we are all blessed and our task is to appreciate and value our blessedness. I see my chosen role as teacher and developer just such an opportunity to encourage others to appreciate their blessings).

And I think that I have learned something of significance, not least about the nature of knowledge itself. Surely I have learned it 'for me' but I offer it here 'for others' too, as others before me have helped me in my learning. As Gregory Bateson helped put me on this particular road, represented by a key quotation that I included also at the start of my first, Diploma paper:-

(I notice I have omitted, in this final revision, a comment I made in an earlier draft about one aspect of my writing. I may not always write with strict regard to grammar! Clearly this may sometimes simply be a mistake. But often it will be a deliberate transgression. I can easily imagine the many red linings by an early English teacher through sentences which start with an And or a But. And sometimes I might miss out a main verb in what purports to be a sentence. I am not setting out to be deliberately contrary or disrespectful. But I am interested to try and maintain some element of the way that the conversation takes place in my head and flows on to the paper. I hope that in this way I may maintain some quality of that flow from me, through my writing, to you).

So, as Gregory Bateson helped me indeed:

"if I am right the whole of our thinking about what we are and what other people are has got to be restructured. This is not funny, and I do not know how long we have to do it in – we may have twenty or thirty years before the logical reductio ad absurdum of our old positions destroys us.

It is the attempt to separate intellect from emotion that is monstrous, and I suggest that it is equally monstrous – and dangerous – to separate the external mind from the internal. Or to separate mind from body.

But there are bridges between the one sort of thought and the other and it seems to me the artists and poets are specifically concerned with these bridges. It is not that art is the expression of the unconscious, but rather it is concerned with the relation between the levels of mental process - - - Artistic skill is the

combining of many levels of mind – unconscious, conscious and external – to make a statement of their combination.” (Bateson, 1970)

(I am tempted here to rush ahead into a discussion of the artist’s role and process, or skill, a crucial element of my thesis. I include a specific reference to this in the section I call Ithaka which includes the notion that the artist’s role, like those of the poet, historian and scholar, is to reconcile the histories of Nature and Culture, akin, I think, to Bateson’s request for a combination of minds. But for now, let me stick with bridge building. This is the problem of trying to weave words, they kind of tumble over themselves to get a look in, a bit like a litter of kittens at play. And like kittens with thread they create an awful tangle).

Bridges are things that you cross, certainly, but also things that join together two sides. I arrived at the start of this programme at Bath with the clear intent to use the time to cross a bridge between, as I saw it then, two incommensurable paradigms.

That sense of the incommensurability of the gap between the world I felt I inhabited and the world to which I aspired was caught in the content and especially the tone of my questions at my first supervision group meeting, which focused on our purpose as budding researchers.

> “What is my anger, what is the source in me that spills over or is expressed in my view of the world of organisation and management?

> Am I in retreat, am I in some sense escaping, taking an easy way out, can I no longer stand the heat?

> What is my right to be here, am I using this place as a transitory staging post or is there some more serious possibility of integration here?” (from CARPP supervision group tape 30/1/96)

It was particularly the third question which encouraged me, somehow, to take seriously the earlier ones, for if I decided I did have the right to be 'there', amongst serious action researchers, then I had to look into these questions of anger and retreat to see if there was not some possibility of an integration, rather than a transitory journey.

It is this second, joining together, meaning of a bridge I feel has emerged through my inquiry. This is not to deny the sense of a journey ‘across’, for I do feel at ‘the other side’ in some way (more grown-up), but somehow the crossing of the bridge has drawn the two sides closer together.

No!

The image is really important here, for I feel those two worlds, or world views, as I saw them then, are as different now as then, the gap is just as big. But bridging the gap is somehow the point, finding some way to live in both worlds at once. This is, then, a journey across a bridge but not knocking it down as I go but rather looking for the links, the way to integrate. I think this is what Jung meant by the term 'individuation', to integrate one's learning through life in the process of growing up.

(As I reflected on this passage again, in my earlier process of revision, I detected a possible sadness, or a sense of compromise – the 'old fire' is gone, replaced by a more worn, if not worn out, acceptance. The bridge really should be burned in a youthful clarity of view and active energy. Maybe this is what "growing up" is like, at least to some extent, to conserve energy and direct it wisely, to be less active.

In this fourth revision I sense that the bridge might collapse rather than be burned).

Bateson helped me in my personal process of integration with his call for combination of different levels of mental process. Somehow I was released from a tendency towards unification rather than a more composite possibility of integration.

But Bateson was asking us to build bridges collectively. I see what I call my 'scholarship' element of this thesis as addressing the more collective aspect. Much of my inquiry into the world view I am a part of is dedicated to the notion that we are at a point of transition as a collective culture (by which I mean the Western culture that so dominates the world presently). And that we each have, as individuals, a part to play in this potential transition. And that artists, as suggested by Bateson, have a particular role in integrating different ways of thinking, the separation of which is somehow at the root of our present malaise.

My hope is that somehow we can re-connect with ourselves as artists, all of us, and by doing so heal the rifts between separate ways of thinking and between ourselves and our world. This is where my scholarship leads.

My research phase has been a parallel inquiry into self and world, the connecting tissue of which has increasingly been an inquiry into knowing. This connecting tissue has been more underground in its character, perhaps a tunnel rather than a bridge. It feels as though I have been burrowing into knowing..

And my inquiry has been into how knowing connects with making choices. In April 1995 I made a fundamental personal choice which was to separate from my first wife and leave my family and home. I joined Donna and together we started our

geographical move to Devon and to establish our professional practices as writers and academics.

In April 1997 we finalised the geographical move and left our respective employing organisations to become an independent partnership. A month later we married. I see these as the choices and events which brought an earlier period of raw-search to an end and made possible the more systematic period of re-search. I could name the earlier period a mid-life crisis and this present period something like a transition into my third age.

Raw-Search.

One way of characterising the difference between these two periods is that my raw-searching led me to make the decisions I have described whereas my re-search period has been a time for reflecting on and making sense of those decisions. But the earlier period started with another decision, which seemed equally startling at the time.

In 1988 I made what seemed then a fundamental decision to leave a successful managerial career. I was the International Personnel Director for Rank Xerox in Europe with an opportunity to continue my progress as a specialist or to move into a general management position within the company.

I decided, instead, to join Ashridge Management College. Ashridge was in the process of establishing a new consulting practice and I joined as a business director charged with establishing a consulting capability in management development.

This move involved a substantial reduction in the pay and benefits I had earned with Rank Xerox along with a very different level and type of responsibility. Seen from the norms of a managerial career, and within our prevailing materialistic culture, I was stepping down substantially. This was my choice.

Along with this change in my professional career, however, I suddenly found myself plunged into what felt like an explosion of other activities.

(I have deliberately expressed this as 'found myself plunged.' Of course, in practice, I made the decisions to pursue the various educational activities I will describe. But my feeling was of plunging in, diving into activities which multiplied, one leading on to another in quick succession. This is the 'explosive' characteristic, a rapid multiplication. And there was a raw quality about my searching, a desperation which I subsequently met in the void on that horizon of Turner's image I call Despair. I am

clear now that I had to divest myself of the cloak of the “successful” manager in order to plunge into seeking my-self. And in the process I dis-covered the enormity of the damage that I and my kind were doing to our world. Of course I ‘knew’ about these dislocations, of self and world, at some level, but I needed to learn so much more).

Psychological Learning.

A significant part of my education involved entering personal therapy with a classically trained Jungian therapist. This was partly with a view to deciding whether to train as a psychotherapist myself, but also to process my feelings of dissatisfaction with what I felt to be the suppression of the creative element in my life. I did decide to pursue my training and completed two years of the three year course run by the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust. My therapy also took me, or rather I took it, I suppose, into the wider questions of my relationships. I decided to quit when I left my wife and family as I felt I could not hold my own process as well as that of clients with whom I was just beginning to work. So I laid down, as it were, a basis in psychotherapy.

In a curious way this felt like a very natural way for me to ‘see’, through a psychological or psychotherapeutic lens and the therapeutic discipline, based on a notion of unconditional regard and deep listening. It has undoubtedly informed my teaching practice substantially.

I also started to take an interest in spirituality. My choice of Psychosynthesis as a school of psychotherapy had been based largely on their inclusion of a transpersonal element. Early on in my training I heard about and made my first visit to Findhorn, the spiritual community established in Forres, Scotland.

Spiritual Learning.

My first visit to Findhorn was for a conference on Intuitive Leadership. I found the experience profoundly moving. I appreciated the possibilities of large group cooperation at a different level than in any of my previous experience. And I valued the effect a spiritual calling seemed to have on both the resident and visiting communities.

I continued to visit Findhorn regularly for a number of years, engaging in a conversation about how that community could itself build a bridge between its spiritual roots and the wider world of business. I suppose this was my first introduction to community, in a really practical and special and difficult way and also to the challenge of leadership in an essentially self-determining, democratic organisation. This was quite different from the experiences I had had of management in large, commercial organisations and I subsequently tried for some years to create something of this sense of community and self-governing leadership at Ashridge in the small consultancy we were building.

As it happens, my joining the course at Bath coincided with, among other things, my choice to withdraw from a leadership role within ACL, another indicator of the shift from raw-search activist to re-search reflector.

I was also conscious, during my first visit to Findhorn, of some kind of psychic connection during an isolated period of meditation. I was 'moved,' literally in the physical sense as well as emotionally, to a depth of reflection I had previously not encountered.

This event, and my subsequent psycho-spiritual explorations, was critical to my raw-searching inquiry into my-self. It has also, I subsequently realise, had a significant impact on my re-searching inquiry into knowing.

I carry the memory of the experience of longing for connection and for some clarity of purpose. The power of the message has informed my subsequent search and scholarship as well as my praxis as teacher and, potentially, writer, in a fundamental way.

(As I re-visit this passage once again in my process of revision and reflection, I notice the impulse to repeat the significance of the event for my present understanding about a form of 'knowing' I might characterise as 'psychic.' I am aware that I almost take this for granted, now, and assume that you, my reader, will be equally at ease with this notion. But my practical experience at the time was that my entry into what I saw as a deeper world of knowing differentiated me from my friends and family, including, crucially, my first wife. I had to find new companions and communities who shared my belief about a way of knowing that seems natural to me and yet is under-privileged or ignored in our wider society. I can not know where you, my reader, stand in relation to the kind of knowing I am trying to describe here. Knowing in this way is deeply inscribed in my experience. I do not try to explain it. I accept it).

I can say that what I call psychic knowing seems ‘natural’ to me now. I mean by this an aspect of ‘psychic’ knowing which is attuned to nature. I gradually learned to associate two phenomena I experienced. One was (is) an apparent capacity to ‘see’ into an other’s psychological motivation which informs, on occasions, my work as teacher and, especially, as coach. The depth of this form of seeing seems to extend the boundary of what we often call intuition. This is an outer manifestation of what I am choosing to call psychic knowing.

The other aspect of my experience is an inner manifestation, as in the early Findhorn example. This is a sense of ‘being seen’ by presences in some ‘other-worldly’ domain. Except that as I live with the experience the domain becomes very much a part of the world I inhabit, hence my use of the term ‘natural.’ It, psychic knowing in both these aspects, seems natural to me now.

At the time of my early experiences, however, it seemed ‘un-natural’ in the sense of strange or un-usual. In a passage I have just returned to in this revising process, Richard Tarnas writes of the “epistemological flexibility” required to appreciate what I call psychic knowing. The context in which he writes is astrological and archetypal, the title of the essay from which this passage is taken is “Prometheus the Awakener, an Essay on the Archetypal Meaning of the Planet Uranus.” You might notice the critical word ‘Awakener’ again, as in my discussion of the Rilke poem with which I opened this chapter. Tarnas first captured my attention in this passage by his reference to the aesthetic:

“Not the least of the many unexpected rewards permitted by the study of astrology is the extraordinary aesthetic satisfaction it so consistently affords. With its seemingly unending disclosure of elegant archetypal patternings synchronously coinciding with corresponding planetary alignments, astrology would appear to have been designed by the cosmos, as it were, to bring forth a certain appreciative awe in witness of this inconceivably complex orchestration.”

He then goes on to describe the necessary epistemological approach:

“And contrary to the assumption of many unversed in the study, the more rigorous the intellectual care brought to the astrological investigation, the more profound the resulting intellectual pleasure. Yet it is the nature of astrological correlations that they demand a different kind of epistemology from that employed by the conventional scientific mind – an eye for multidimensional

archetypal structures, an openness to the possibility of meaningful coincidence, a willingness to transcend limited assumptions about the nature of reality. Such correlations are more readily visible to the epistemologically flexible mind.”
(Tarnas 1995: p. 75).

I soon made my own connections between psychic knowing and the archetypal, as I will go on to discuss. My subsequent raw-searching led me to the astrological aspect of the archetypal domain, hence my interest in the Tarnas essay.

Archetypal Learning – the Soul.

In the explosive multiplication of this period, my first experience of psychic knowing at Findhorn led me further into my inquiry of the archetypal dimension of psychology.

So, in a way I combined these two streams of learning, the psychological and the spiritual, in pursuing courses with the London Convivium of Archetypal Psychology.

Noel Cobb and Eva Loewe established the Convivium and edited Sphinx, the journal of the Convivium. They described Sphinx as a *“journal in service of the return of the soul to the world and the world to soul. It proposes an alchemical and poetic, rather than clinical and linear, language when speaking of psyche – an imaginative language which will do justice to the subtleties and enigmas of psychological life.”*
(Sphinx 5, cover)

They also translated much poetry including the Rilke which I have chosen as the introduction to my thesis. And I have referred earlier, in the Dialectic Thou, to their influence on me in the section on A Way of Beauty.

I had encountered the concept of archetypes in my studies of Jung, the father, in a way, of the psychosynthesis school of psychotherapy. This twentieth century version of the concept describes archetypes as autonomous primordial forms in the psyche that structure and impel human behaviour and experience and that are expressions of a collective unconscious shared by all human beings. In the course of analysing a vast range of psychological and cultural phenomena, Jung concluded that, although human experience was locally conditioned by a multitude of concrete biographical, cultural, and historical factors, subsuming all these at a deeper level appeared to be certain universal patterns or modes of experience, primordial forms that constantly arranged the elements of human experience into typical configurations and

gave to collective human psychology a dynamic continuity. These archetypes endured as basic a priori symbolic forms while taking on the costume of the moment in each individual life and each cultural era, permeating each experience, each cognition, and each world view.

(Jung's principle work in this field is C.G.Jung, "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious," volume 9, part 1 of The Collected Works, second edition, 1968.)

Archetypal psychology is a Jungian project, sponsored by Cobb and Loewe based on the work of, amongst others, James Hillman and Thomas Moore. As I encountered these writers, in particular, I was introduced to perhaps the earliest form of the archetypal perspective, and in a way its deepest ground, in the primordial experience of the great gods and goddesses of ancient myth. In this mode of consciousness, memorably embodied in the dawn of Western culture in the Homeric epics, reality is understood to be pervaded and structured by powerful numinous forces and presences that are personified as mythic deities.

And in the work of Hillman and Moore I met these mythic creatures in a language which excited me. In a passage written by Moore of Hillman, this essential quality is elegantly captured:

"If you were to apply the Renaissance notion of rhetoric, in which various styles of expression correspond to the various gods and goddesses, you would find many classical modes in the writings included here."

"The polemics of Mars shine through clearly, as Hillman separates (the traditional work of Mars) his version of psychologizing from that of others, both friends and foes. A venusian appreciation for the sensuality of words and ideas, so rare in modern analytical writing, appears in his language and in the tapestry of his thinking. Saturn is there, too, with his incorrigible love of tradition and abstraction. Hillman gives over to Saturn by indulging in detailed footnotes. But the true archon of these writings is Mercury, the god who is always in transit between the precincts of the divine and the concerns of the human.

According to medieval and Renaissance alchemists and philosophers, Mercury is the god who reveals insight in the colors of a thing, in the surprise visages that appear when a thing is turned around and over and upside down.

Hillman takes philosophy into his hands and speaks elegantly about it, but his

words do not sound like philosophy. He speaks of religion in ways that worry theologians and devotees and yet gives religious language new life. He takes up ancient mythology and alchemy and turns them so that they speak to the most recent concerns. Above all, he re-visions psychology, taking it back from those who use it as a science of behaviour, to treat it as an art of the soul."

(Moore 1989: pp. 1-2.)

So much of my argument in this document is about a way of knowing which is mysterious, psychic knowing as I have named it. And I feel the need to capture, to 'present' that kind of knowing in a way, a language and beyond language, which is congruent. Somehow meeting Noel and Eva, listening to what they had to say and the conditions that they created in which to say it, absolutely confirmed some part of my own being and again contributed substantially to the way I now teach. And the way Hillman and Moore convey their arguments has been an inspiration to my sense of congruency and has impacted on the way I try to write.

I attempt to pay my own tribute to Eva, especially, in my little essay on 'The Way of Beauty,' which you will find at Chapter 10. Her inspiration was profound for the style in which she conveyed her message of hope.

And so was Noel's, somehow offering an intellectually robust and yet thoroughly congruent route into the world of soul. When I now speak and write of the aesthetic I do so with an appreciation of their teaching which was a combination of scholarship and style.

Through Noel and Eva's introductions I met so many teachers who influenced me in that raw state in which I encountered them, including the living presences of Hillman and Moore and those to whom they referred.

The archetypal path of my inquiry led, inevitably, to Plato. Building on the critical inquiries of his master Socrates, Plato gave to the archetypal perspective its classic metaphysical formulation. In the Platonic view, archetypes – the Ideas or Forms – are absolute essences that transcend the empirical world and yet give the world its form and meaning. They are timeless universals that serve as the fundamental reality informing any concrete particular (for example, something is beautiful to the exact extent that the archetype of Beauty is present in it).

Richard Tarnas, who inspired a particular thrust of my 'scholarship' through his magisterial and magical history "The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the

Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View,” (Tarnas, 1991), claims that *“direct knowledge of these Forms or Ideas is recognised as the spiritual goal of the philosopher and the intellectual passion of the scientist.”*

My own intellectual passion had been excited by what felt like a revelation of my own soul, a powerful organ of knowing, and the many connections forged by the archetypal dimension and its exploration through the ages. At a meeting of the Convivium in London, one evening, I met Kathleen Raine, the founder of the Temenos Academy, poet and scholar, in particular, of Blake and Yeats.

Raine introduced me to the idea of what she calls “the perennial wisdom.” In her editorial to the Temenos Academy Review, Spring 1998, she claims *“yet the ‘perennial philosophy’, as the ageless tradition of spiritual knowledge has come to be called, may become buried or obscured but has never been quite extinguished. In Europe, the Platonic mainstream, flowing at times within, at times outside Christendom, has been the nourishment of architects, poets, painters and musicians. At times the current has flowed underground, through such esoteric groups as the Rosicrucians, Freemasons and other theosophical Fellowships, sending up springs and fountains which have nourished the imaginative life of the Italian Renaissance, Elizabethan England, the Romantic poets, the American Transcendentalists, and the Irish ‘renaissance’ of this century. It seems fitting that Temenos should pay tribute to those through whom the knowledge has come to us.”* (Raine 1998: pp. 6-7)

I hope that in my way I am continuing that tradition. Kathleen Raine opened a door on to a world of whose existence I was only dimly aware and others, (writers and artists and scholars I consider to be my teachers), have helped me shed more light on to multiple ways of knowing that involve so much more than the intellectual abstractions I was then used to.

(I just need to pause here for a moment. In a curious way I have only realised now, in this final revision, (actually this was written in the penultimate revision, but it still holds true) - (oh, dear, these 'nows' and 'finals' can get rather confused as a previous 'final' turns into a new 'penultimate'! I suppose this is one power of living inquiry, as I perceive it, which is to emphasise the temporary, provisional nature of knowing.) the power of that lesson. I have learned to appreciate knowing differently, in multiple ways. I have learned to appreciate my own ways of knowing differently and to trust them rather than reduce myself in my eyes to a “lesser educated,” or “inferior intellect.” My teachers have been marvelous in their knowing and in their humility. This is

wisdom, surely, a combination of profound knowingness which includes not knowing. And valuing the not knowing.

I count myself privileged that in this explosion of learning I had the chance to meet so many of these teachers, who I revered as writers, for real. At meetings of the Convivium and of the Temenos Academy, and subsequently at conferences at Dartington in Devon and at Schumacher College, (to which we will be getting a little later in my story) I met Hillman and Moore and Raine and Tarnas, to refer simply to those recently mentioned in my text.

I am reading one of Judi Marshall's side notes to an earlier draft at this point. It asks "is there enough speaking out, holding frame. I don't know - - but the reader may just be tagging along, not clear enough to hear the important things you are saying." Which is obviously a worry. What am I trying to say? Well, perhaps I should open up a wider frame? Perhaps I need to be clearer about the learning which comes from reflection, through writing, rather than relying on the description of the events and learnings of the time?

As I re-visit once again (and this is, now, in my final revision) - (actually penultimate) - the explosive awakening during the early stages of my raw-searching, (the events I have so far described took place over about a two year period, in 1990 to 1992), remind me of two aspects which informed my subsequent decisions.

One is the power of teachers. This is not a 'power over.' None of these people tried to convince me in any way. They are each characterised by a complete mastery of their field which they express, in my experience, with great humility and with a continuing spirit of inquiry. There is a vitality in the learning of these scholars which I find profoundly inspirational.

The second is the inter-relation between the power of their teaching in person and their writing. I have been consistently drawn to scholars who write with a precision and fluency rooted in their mastery. Raine is a great poet herself as well as a deeply serious scholar of Blake and Yeats, for example. Hillman, as already described, is an artist of psychology in the same way as Moore is of religion. Tarnas writes with a deftness which transcends the academically rigorous quality of his argument.

These qualities of teaching and writing take learning, in my view, beyond the immediate scope of their knowing into the archetypal realms that I am exploring here. I am affected way beyond an intellectual appreciation. I have been changed thoroughly as a human being by these people. This is what is possible, I believe, through the

teachings of that perennial wisdom of which Raine writes, in a way which is beautiful – which enfolds the Form of Beauty.

I am re-inspired and confirmed in my pursuit of the twin practices of writing and teaching, no longer concerned that teaching is somehow en route to writing, but that the opportunity to teach is one that I value enormously and would like to pursue. I want to teach more as well as write more, this I now know.

With this contemporary reflection aired, I would like to return to my earlier script to capture how I responded to Judi's marginal prompt!)

(But let me just add a further reflection as I revise again (in May 2002). I have been increasingly appreciating the art of writing as a reflective practice, for myself, including the 'craft' of revision for what I now describe as 'revisionary reflection'. I imagine that the writer/teachers I so admire have also benefitted from this same crafting activity. And I have appreciated the consequences in a fully externalised articulation).

As I read back through my journals of this period I re-connect with the energy of profound searching. It is easy to reduce this, the pain and profundity, by naming it a "mid-life crisis." Clearly it was a crisis in my life at that age and contained many of the hallmarks of the male mid-life crisis as it is generally perceived in our present culture, especially as it ended, after a tortuous period, in my separation and divorce, along with much else by way of life-choices. But this was my particular experience and just because it fits into a pattern that we might recognise and name does not, in my estimation, invalidate its significance. On the contrary, I believe that many of the impulses and anxieties I was responding to are thoroughly present in our culture, perhaps especially among men who, like me, had been brought up to fulfil a certain role, as responsible parent, worker and husband, in a particular way, in a materialistic way, essentially. I know that at forty years of age, or thereabouts, I faced the certainty of my own mortality with a mixture of dread and liberation.

My sense of liberation was considerable. As I have only this life, then I had better do my best with it. And my sense of dread was that I was stuck in some kind of pre-determined pattern of behaviour which suppressed my creativity, especially. I felt, at some level, that I had a gift, a talent, which was not being expressed through my managerial work.

And while I grappled with my own demons I also became much more aware of the parlous state of the world. The one, it seemed, fed off the other. My journals interpose extracts of psychological or spiritual importance for me with pieces of science

writing, especially, alerting me to the issues of ecology and the possibilities of the dramatically different insights of the “new sciences,” compared to the certainties of the engineering models with which I was thoroughly trained.

So this raw-search had a desperate quality about it, in a way, in the search I was making for meaning in my life and in my desperation that we, me and my fellow white, Western men, managers and engineers, technologists, blind material men, were destroying the planet.

And in this combination of the inner and outer, the search for meaning and the search for hope, my searching had a certain trajectory, a logic to it, a pattern that I began to discern.

I have introduced you to a number of crucial elements to this pattern so far –

- > the psychological – inner work – Psychosynthesis
- > the spiritual – transformative work - Findhorn
- > the soulful – archetypal work – Convivium and Temenos

Within each of these places I found some sense of **community** and a regard for what it is to **lead** such a place and an appreciation for a particular quality of **teaching**. My learning was operating at a number of levels, learning about new areas of knowledge and gaining in understanding, certainly, but also confirming aspects of me and what I already knew in some way before and placing this realisation in the service of others through notions of community, leadership and teaching.

The Convivium had its own sense of community, too, of a more dispersed kind than the resident community of Findhorn, and Noel and Eva exhibited an interesting joint leadership. I will write some more about this particular quality of community when I describe the qualities of ‘academy,’ represented by Ficino’s Florentine academy. Florence is the next point of call in this raw-searching journey.

Ficino in Florence.

I have introduced you to a number of my living teachers and suggested a kind of trajectory, or route, that connected them. My explosive learning led me (I chose to go, of course!) to Florence.

"A rainy afternoon in late April. Spring showers on the road from Cancelli down to the Villa Medici. At Careggi, tall crenellated ochre walls: the Medici palace, its garden glistening with puddles in the soft but bright Florentine light. Such was our first afternoon at the Seventh Conference of The London Convivium for Archetypal Studies in the Spring of 1993."

(Noel Cobb writing in his editorial to Sphinx 6, published in 1994.)

We met, the Convivium, in the Villa Careggi, which had been home to Ficino and his academicians. The spirit of the place lingers on in my imagination and Ficino hovers as some kind of master in the background, an intermediary between the ancient wisdom of the Greeks and our modern, or post-modern, re-valuation of all that we knew then and seem to be painfully re-learning, or so it seems. Ficino is, for me, the central figure in the Re-naissance. My hope is that we are in the midst of what I think of as the Re-naissance, another birth.

I see the many teachers that I have studied as members of Ficino's academy extended in to this age, as well as holders of the flame of Raine's perennial philosophy.

April 1993 represents for me something of a mid-point in my raw-searching journey. It may have been the low point, the pit of depression, as suggested by theories of transition. (For example, Spencer and Adams, "Life Changes," 1990, referred to later in this chapter.)

I notice the significance of 'April,' a spring month which re-appears at crucial moments of decision, of choice and action, in my life as re-told in this story.

My archetypal journey led me to Saturn in Florence. It also enriched my inquiry into the astrological aspect of the archetypal. In his essay on "Prometheus the Awakener," which I have previously referred to, Richard Tarnas describes the mediating role of astrology between the Jungian and Platonic conceptions:

"while Jungian archetypes are considered to be the basic formal principles of the human psyche, Platonic archetypes are regarded as the essential principles of reality itself, rooted in the very nature of the cosmos. Mediating this debate between modern psychology and classical philosophy, astrology suggests that

archetypes possess a reality that is both subjective and objective, informing both inner human psyche and outer cosmos. In effect, planetary archetypes are here recognized as being both Jungian and Platonic in nature – universal essences or forms at once intrinsic to and independent of the human mind – and are regarded as functioning in a Pythagorean-Platonic cosmic setting, i.e., in a cosmos that is pervasively integrated by virtue of some form of universal intelligence. From this perspective, what Jung called the collective unconscious can be viewed as being ultimately embedded within the cosmos itself, whose moving patterns are reflected in the dynamics of human experience. In Platonic terms, astrology suggests the existence of an anima mundi informing the cosmos, a world soul in which the human psyche participates." (Tarnas 1995: pp.6-7)

My inquiry took me to other discussions of the notion of *anima mundi*, particularly in the field of deep ecology which we will come to. At this point in my explosive inquiry, however, my attention was rather more attuned to the sky and the planets than the earth. And my attention was deeply introspective as I struggled to ‘let go,’ as transition theory would suggest, of some previously held conception of myself.

My week in Ficino’s Florence was curiously divided between days spent in heady discussion in the Villa Careggi, the place that Ficino had established his academy, and nights in a monastery cell at Cancelli, accompanied in my grief by the haunting music of Henryck Gorecki. His 3rd symphony, the “Symphony of Sorrowful Songs” had been recently recorded by Dawn Upshaw with the London Sinfonietta under David Zinman. I played it over and over through the headphones of my Sony Walkman as I lay, separated from my companion, in an adolescent rage of despair.

And while I faced and avoided my demons, I met the notion of daemon, an intervening presence in the spiritual realm. And I was alerted to the extraordinary similarity between aspects of Ficino’s astrological chart and my own, especially the role of Saturn.

Darby Costello gave a stunning analysis of Ficino during the conference which was subsequently written up in Sphinx as “Remembering Eros: a Ficinian Response to Love in the Nineties.” The “Dialogue between an Astrologer and a Student,” in which form this essay proceeds, continues to haunt me with its uncanny coincidences. Its particular erotic argument escaped me altogether at the time, despite the fact, seen so obviously from a safe reflexive distance, that I was deeply enmeshed in thrashing out

the implications of two existing relationships in my life and probably, at a more fundamental level, aspects of my-self in relationship.

For the purposes of this account, my thesis, let me concentrate on the philosophical aspect of the Saturnine connection. I will enter the dialogue at the point that Saturn makes his entrance:

"Vita: His sun in Scorpio is in the ninth house square Saturn on the ascendant in Aquarius. His Venus in Virgo was just entering his eighth house, trine to Mars in the 12th.

Sylvie: Yes, I noticed that Saturn. On the ascendant in Aquarius – mirrors his idealistic approach to life, and his need of embodying his ideals."

(The particular language of astrology and the concepts it conveys may be strange to you. It was completely strange to me when I first heard this presentation. I was in a state which had by then become familiar, listening to a presentation amongst people who seemed perfectly at ease with the language and with the field of knowledge and its underlying world view the language assumed. But as with my first introduction to the poetry of Rilke and the visions of Munch, so here too was I transfixed by a message which seemed destined for me. Emerging from the opaque terminology was a familiar. The familiar was a feeling. But the familiar was also a man. Ficino. My archetypal father as I have learned to think of him).

"Saturn in its own house of Aquarius – on the ascendant – suggests an awkward relationship to his body, a deep self-consciousness in the most uncomfortable sense, as well as in the most self-developing sense. The struggling, square aspect to his Sun suggests he had to work very hard to achieve his goals. As his Sun was in the ninth house, could you say it was a struggle to achieve his own philosophy?

Vita: That's an excellent analysis. Your 'rusty' astrology is pretty good! If you remember, the highest goal of the ninth house, of journeys and education, is the goal of philosophy – to find a personal, eternal meaning in the constantly shifting patterns. And so the Saturnian ascendant squaring his ninth house Sun indicates a great struggle to achieve this goal. He had to embody his high ideal of Saturn in Aquarius, standing as an example to others, and he had to transform his own given passionate nature into wisdom. His Sun was also strengthened by Pluto in Cancer, which was opposite his Moon in Capricorn in the eleventh house, of groups (and dreams fulfilled through groups). Even though Pluto had not been

discovered yet, this Lord of Death and Rebirth was secretly facilitating his urge to break through his own nature – to die to his own nature in order to achieve something profound.” (Costello 1994: pp. 177-8.)

It took me a while before I was prepared to consider gazing into my own birth chart. It all seemed too absurd to a management consultant, previously a high flying International Personnel Specialist, educated in the certainties of Mechanical and Production Engineering. I was a ‘good boy,’ a loyal husband (sic) and dedicated father. I was falling apart.

But when I did, eventually, re-connect with the particular astrological analysis of Ficino, through a colleague of Darby’s, Geoffrey Cornelius who was also at the conference, I shuddered at the coincidences. I will speak more of my work with Geoffrey in the next chapter.

My inquiry had been pursuing parallel paths. As well as the primarily inner avenues of the psyche and soul, I had been exploring the outer world of ecology. And I found a meeting point in the Imagination at Schumacher College.

Schumacher College, Sanity and the Imagination.

My journey took me, in the Spring of 1992, to another place. Schumacher College was set up by Satish Kumar in the Old Postern on the Dartington Estate under the auspices of the Dartington Trustees to provide an holistic educational experience.

I was attracted by a course which seemed to combine so many of my emerging interests in psychology, ecology and the imagination. The scholars in residence were Theodore Roszak who was at that time writing “The Voice of the World: An Exploration of Ecopsychology,” and Lindsay Clarke, author of “The Chymical Wedding.”

I knew these men as writers. Roszak, at that time a Professor of History at California State University, had alerted me to his brand of broad reaching contemporary reflection, in a prose style which is masterful, in an earlier book, “Where the Wasteland Ends.” I was fascinated by his proposed conjunction between ecology and psychology, “right up my street,” as it were.

And to complete what I then painted as a triangle of converging intellectual streams, Clarke brought his insights from writing a novel which had fired my imagination with its remarkable weaving of the alchemical into a “romance.” Lindsay

represented for me “writer.” His book exemplified my own aspiration to write lucidly and excitingly about serious issues in our contemporary world, reflecting insights from earlier wisdoms.

(I set out writing my novel, *Ham Stone*, with an ambitious intention to represent the astrological in a similar way that Lindsey had treated the alchemical in “The Chymical Wedding”).

To some extent, and at its best, the Schumacher model of education comes closest in my present experience to the Ficinian academy of my imagination. Participants from many ages, professions, crafts and countries, gather to “sit at the feet of” learned scholars, to exchange knowings over an extended period, at a pace which fosters digestion. Satish’s buddhism offers a spiritual and practical discipline. Meditation is a voluntary and regular feature. The resident community, both permanent and temporary, share the work of cleaning and cooking, maintaining the place.

This is an academy whose style speaks to me. And much of the teaching focuses on that collision between the scientific, artistic, external, internal, spiritual, psychological, ecological that I had been experiencing on my own journey, in my raw-searching. There is a possibility of integration here, in content and style, which might form a bridge, if I return to that key metaphor, for the subsequent stage of my journey.

Ted Roszak, I remember so clearly, asked his first, fateful question – “so, how would you define insanity?” He helped me to see the fundamental insanity of the materialist project in a different way, as a collective denial of the void, the absence of meaning in our culture as it claws its way, it feels to me, out of the despair of the modern into some new, post-modern possibility. He gave me an historical perspective which I have subsequently pursued in my own attempt at scholarship.

(I could so easily digress here into a discussion of my view of the insanity of our materialist culture. Suffice to say that I met in Roszak’s analysis a resonance with the void I had perceived on the horizon of Despair. In the same way that I had felt restrained from approaching it, to peer over the edge, so do I see in our consuming culture an addiction, obsessively designed to avoid the void).

I met Lindsay primarily as writer and yearned to join him as a fellow craftsman, as writer. He certainly offered me intellectual nourishment and I will be forever grateful for his particular way of seeing the Imagination. But as well as embodying writer Lindsay was – is – a natural teacher. He had us out writing, out in the sense of out of doors, amongst the world we inhabit, and out in the sense of writing and reading what

we wrote. This was a wonderful way to learn, I discovered, and it has become a crucial part of my method. I learn what I know by writing it.

Lindsay Clarke effectively offered me a way of integrating the two lines of inquiry I had been pursuing. His particular definition of the Imagination as that place in which the inner and outer meet in some kind of collision, a ‘theatre of contention,’ in a key phrase from the Ted Hughes quotation which Lindsey introduced to me at that time:

“The real problem comes from the fact that outer and inner world are interdependent at every moment. We are simply the locus of their collision. Two worlds, with mutually contradictory laws, or laws that seem to us to be so, colliding afresh every second, struggling for peaceful coexistence. And whether we like it or not our life is what we make of that collision and struggle.

So what we need, evidently, is a faculty that embraces both worlds simultaneously. A large, flexible grasp, an inner vision which holds wide open, like a great theatre, the arena of contention, and which pays equal respects to both sides. Which keeps faith, as Goethe says, with the world of things and the world of spirits equally. This really is imagination.”

(Hughes 1994: p. 150.)

Here it is, the idea that unites my searching! And as I will discuss in more detail in chapter 5, the Imagination has become a central fulcrum to my subsequent inquiries. It acts as a beacon along the ‘perennial wisdom’ that Kathleen Raine spoke of, uniting the Renaissance spirit with the later Romantics and the earlier Greeks. It is the faculty which unites my scholarship with my life inquiry.

“But before imagination can operate in this way,” says Sagar in considering Hughes’s suggestion, “as a healing force, it must make the necessary inner and outer connections to allow creative energy to flow through the body and all its faculties. The artist as physician must first heal himself.” (Sagar 2000: p. 10)

(In a way this argument for personal healing is a validation of my choice to focus my re-search on the introspective, or personal, inquiry that I am relating here. First heal thyself).

As well as introducing me to the power of the imagination through words, Lindsay also offered me an image which effectively replaces my metaphorical bridge. In a moment no less unforgettable than Roszak's question about insanity, Clarke asked us to close our eyes and see, in the inner darkness, two converging circles, the inner and the outer. And as they converge and merge, the intervening area is almond shaped. This, Hughes's theatre, is named by Clarke as the "mandorla," which means almond in Italian.

So, rather than constructing a bridge I was in the process of peeling away the crusty, hard shell of my life as I had lived it, to reveal the tasty nut inside. It would take the despair of Spring 1993 in Florence to complete the peeling and then the Spring of 1995 finally to find the fruit.

I add, then, to my emerging pattern:-

> **the ecological** – outer work and connection – Schumacher

And I find in my own process the power of writing and the imagination.

Life Changes

(A title I have borrowed, because it seems appropriate enough, from the book of that title by Sabina Spencer and John Adams, 1990. I had the pleasure to work with them at Ashridge. Their sub-title is "Growing through Personal Transitions!" and I have referred to their version of the 'transition curve' in my section on Florence.)

I remember, during that first Schumacher course, Lindsay reading to us the first chapter of his subsequent book, "Alice's Masque." I did not know, at the time, how appropriate that story would be to my subsequent upheaval, telling as it does the story of a wandering and wondering middle aged man, out of touch with his marriage and the world he has constructed, trying to find guidance for a new beginning.

In the way that stories have of circling back on themselves, I will always feel a special attachment to Schumacher College and to Lindsay. It was his earlier book, "The Chymical Wedding," which drew Donna to that place, Schumacher College, to work with Lindsay on a subsequent course, in April 1995. And I was drawn back, wanting to work with Lindsay again and attracted by the theme, Myth, Imagination and Meaning.

It was this combination, Myth, Imagination and Meaning as expressed so movingly in the Chymical Wedding, an alchemical integration, that brought us together, the conjunctio.

Donna appeared at the end of that first, raw period of search and her appearance caused me to see the sun rise, for the first time. The story of that epiphany appears in Chapter 7.

Drawing the Story to a Close.

I hope that I have given an appropriate sense of the scope of my raw searching. I have tried to acknowledge many of my primary teachers during this period. I have continued to try to incorporate their teachings into the way I live my life and conduct my praxis. I hope that much of the ‘scholarship’ I try to capture in this thesis pays some tribute to them and the tradition they represent.

The raw search changed its character into this subsequent period of re-search, of refinement and integration.

Donna helped me change my life. And in the context of this particular telling of my story acted as the pivotal force which shifted me from raw-search into action and then into a more contemplative re-search phase.

Within four weeks of meeting we had each separated ourselves from our previous lives to start afresh. In alchemical terms, solve et coagula, dissolve and congeal, separate and connect.

In my case the separation from self, in its earlier manifestation, had been completed in a monastery cell in Florence under the tutelage, if I choose to tell my story that way, of Ficino. And my re-formation took place under the dawning sun, which is the way I choose to tell my story, at Dartington.

In mid-life then, a cliché in a way, but no less powerful nor turbulent for all that, I made my choice. Robert Bly captures the sense of it in a poem I turn up in my journal from the time, nestling under the line: “I hope I have done the right thing. There is no turning back now.”

“At Midocean

All day I loved you in a fever, holding on to the tail of the horse.

I overflowed whenever I reached out to touch you.

My hand moved over your body, covered with its dress,

burning, rough, an animals foot or hand moving over leaves.

The rainstorm retires, clouds open, sunlight

sliding over ocean water a thousand miles from land.” (Bly 1987)

I reckon I came to my senses.

I learned to see the sun rise each day and marveled that it did so; I stood and looked at its passage across the ocean, especially, its light gleaming on the water. It spoke to me. And when I doubt, which I often do, when I return to my own pit of sorrow and despair, I return to the sun and its daily passage over the earth and the light that it spreads, gleaming on the water. It continues to speak to me of hope, that there is a meaning to our passage, to my passage, through this allotted span of time.

I hope eventually, when this writing is completed, my thesis turned in, to return to my novel, half started, to tell this story in a different way, to fulfil the dream I formed at Schumacher or rather confirmed then, for it has always been my dream, to write.

But in the meantime I have this project, my PhD thesis, my bid to enter the academy, to complete. It is one that I decided to embark on during our first holiday together, Donna and I, in the summer of 1995.

I have a few pages in my journal, dated 16/8/95:-

“ PhD day One - I want to study the notion that we are, indeed, at a turning point, another of those extraordinary shifts in the collective culture that we then look back upon and name as the start of a new era, a New Age. I want to go back to study Greek culture and I want to understand the Renaissance – are we at a re-Renaissance?” (RGL journal, 16/8/95)

So, in a way, my raw-search ended with a series of fundamental decisions, made and enacted in 1995. One of these decisions, more of an idea at that point, was to shift my pattern of work at Ashridge away from consulting and towards research.

This aspect took form during early 1996 when I suggested a transfer within Ashridge to take up a newly created research leadership role and applied to CARPP essentially to become researcher, or more clearly academic. The transfer did not happen.

In the end I continued consulting and left the organisation in 1997 to go independent, remaining a close Associate of ACL. But I could say that my period of re-search started in January 1996 when I attended my first CARPP session. And I end this period with renewed intention to make the space in my life for writing.

And also for teaching.

A DIALECTIC THOU - GROWING UP

1st draft December 2001

2nd draft May 2002

This second chapter of Robin's auto-biographical section deepens the inner aspect of his inquiry. The chapter traces a sequence of inquiry which started, in the way that stories have to have a beginning, in a conversation in Robin's supervision group at Bath and ends with the death of his father. Which is a suitably melodramatic way to embellish the story-telling aspect of the chapter.

Telling a Story of Growing Up.

In a study of Ted Hughes he calls "The Laughter of Foxes", Keith Sagar suggests that, *"before imagination can operate as a healing force, it must make the necessary inner and outer connections to allow creative energy to flow through the body and all its faculties. The artist as physician must first heal himself."* (Sagar 2000: p. 10)

The disease for which Robin required this healing force was the subject, one might say, of his despair as he stood before Turner's image of Solitude. There are, of course, many ways of interpreting despair, but one way that this particular aspect of Robin's inquiry focuses on is Separation - the subject of much of his psychotherapeutic work, as will become clearer as his story unfolds. There is a direct link, in Robin's telling of his own story, between the Despair he saw in Turner's image of Solitude and his own experience of Separation.

There is a wider aspect of this disease, at a cultural level, which will figure in Robin's chapter on The Imagination. But before considering his prescription for the world's condition, Robin as 'the artist as physician must first heal himself'.

The medium through which Robin's healing takes place is the Imagination. His interest in Sagar's description of Hughes's process is the way the Imagination seems to seize on a particular story which has the resonance of Myth. He suggests that: *"The imagination*

of the great writer is drawn, with or without his knowledge, towards these paradigms of human experience we all inherit. It will automatically, as an auto-therapeutic reflex, seize upon, adapt for its purposes, whatever myth or mythic paradigm seems at that moment to offer the greatest possibility of healing. As Hughes said in a discussion: "I don't think it's possible to invent a story that your whole being doesn't need in this way of a myth that is trying to heal you . . . You think of one myth rather than another because that myth is the one that belongs to you at that moment. You cannot create imaginatively anything that isn't made in healing yourself, otherwise it just isn't imaginative." (ibid: pp. 11-12)

Robin makes no claim to be a great writer, but believes that this same process of imaginative healing, through invoking 'the myth of the moment', is available to us all through an artistic reflective practice, in this case the telling of a story through writing.

The particular story that Robin relates in this chapter is of his coming to terms with the death of his father. The mythic quality which is captured in the title, "Growing Up", is the need for the son to separate from his father, often portrayed as the son killing his father. He has to kill his father, in imaginative terms, before he can grow up.

The death of his father, when he was eight years old, has had a significant effect on the way that Robin has led his life. The event and its associated circumstances is a defining element of the 'story' that Robin tells himself about his life - it has 'mythic' dimensions.

This chapter relates his coming to terms with his father's death, in the period he called in the previous chapter Raw-searching, through his psychotherapeutic process. It overlays on to this first stage reflection, a series of 'reflexive revisions'. This process of reflective writing, as described in the preceding Dialectic Thou, has given Robin a further distance from which to re-view his subsequent response to this major disruption in his early life.

The construction, or story, that Robin now tells, in this revised form, is of coming to terms with the death of his father from an adult perspective. This contrasts with the earlier raw-search response, through his psychotherapy, when he essentially re-connected with his feelings from a child's perspective.

There are two re-framings or shifts in perspective at work here. One is Robin's 'growing up' from a child-like to an adult perspective. The dream sequence included in the story you are about to read, as Robin chooses to interpret it, is his imaginative (mythic)

slaying of his father, which allows him to 'grow up' into adulthood. This is classic 'rite of passage', which would normally have taken place during Robin's rebellious adolescence.

But the further reflections that the revision of this chapter have led Robin to realise is that he would have been likely to have physically 'buried' his father at some time during this raw- and re-searching phase of his life. The early death of his father robbed, one might say, Robin of both his adolescent 'rite of passage' into early adulthood and the subsequent passage into his 'third age' as the 'old man of the family'.

Robin describes his release from the constraining consequences of the 'deprived position' he previously adopted, as a consequence of these re-framings or ways of seeing differently, particularly in relation to his being able to hear criticism constructively. It was during the inquiry that this chapter relates that Robin recognised the power of this second aspect of re-framing, which is to be able to 'hear differently'.

The purposive and methodological aspects that these Dialectic Thous are intended to address are intimately entwined in tracing the reflexive process at work along with its particular outcome in one aspect of what Robin describes as his 'growing up.'

Soul and Imaginative Melancholy.

There is a second stream of writing in the following chapter which is about the notion of melancholy as represented by the archetypal figure of Saturn. This Saturnian aspect probably continues to be the most problematic element of his thesis, in Robin's estimation, along with a failure by him to adequately research, in the sense of scholarship, the alchemical arena.

Robin senses, within himself, an underlying melancholic disposition which found its most potent expression in the despair he felt at the time which is here, in his thesis, represented by Turner's image of Solitude. Robin recognises that he has changed his life substantially since then in ways that his thesis records and reflects on. Hope, and indeed Joy, have found their place alongside Despair. Robin's quotation from Gibran's work, "The Prophet," is intended to convey this qualitative shift consequent upon the construction of his reflexive bridge, as described in the previous chapter.

But the present ‘wobbly’ aspect of his bridge, as recognised in the fourth revision to that chapter, is a representation, in his view, of the continuing challenge of melancholy, as represented by the archetypal figure of Saturn.

The link between these two streams of writing in chapter 2 is that of fathering. Robin has come to believe, which he now recognises as the consequence of a particular mythic construction in the way he tells his-story, that he has replaced his missing father with archetypal representations. Many have entered the story he has told already in the figures of teachers both dead and alive. Marsilio Ficino, for instance, clearly fulfils this role. And one of Robin's fascinations with the figure of Ficino is his reported Saturnine aspect.

In killing his father in imaginative terms Robin now suggests, as a consequence of his latest reflexive revision, that he has liberated himself from the constraining consequence of his deprivation and transformed the power of melancholy. The chapter closes with a first attempt at describing this process within an alchemical framing.

Once again, then, content and form entwine as Robin revises his text in the interest of clarifying for you, his reader, the sense he makes of this father/son aspect of his inner inquiry. You are invited to attend his story, certainly. But, in a way, the point of the telling of his story is in the recognition of the mythic quality of the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of our lives. And the PhD point is to suggest the power of reflexive writing, as a method, potentially to re-frame the previously constraining aspect of a particular story. In this way, Robin suggests, learning to make new choices, to live life differently, is the liberation from inner reflection into outer manifestation.

CHAPTER 2 - GROWING UP

1st draft January 1998
Included in MPhil paper
2nd draft May 2000
3rd draft September 2000
4th draft December 2000
5TH draft October 2001
final revision May 2002

Introduction.

As the list of dates above suggests, this has been a much-worked chapter. In a curious way it feels to me now, as I start what I am determined will be my final revision, (in actuality the 5th draft) that it has provided a focus for much of my inner inquiry. It has taken the increasing distance afforded by these subsequent revisions and reflections for me to make sufficient sense of the material to feel that I have a reasonable story line.

As indicated in the Dialectic Thou a significant element of the chapter is how I have come to appreciate the power of the story I have told myself about myself – the power of personal myth. And the significance of the re-working is a testament, I believe, to the effort and process required to revise the story. And by revising my history, I am suggesting, I am liberating myself into a state of choice rather than constraint.

I am naming this process as ‘Growing Up.’

One of the defining features of my life has been my father’s death. And it is probably no accident that had he lived to a “normal” life expectancy, he would most likely have died at some stage during this period I call my re-searching. This new thought occurs, that my period of raw-search certainly had as one key aspect my coming to terms with my feelings towards my father when he was alive, buried deep as they were. I could now see this second period of re-search as coming to terms with his death.

Growing up, in these terms, is to be fatherless – finally on my own. I have to be able to “cope,” without protection. This is a new way, for me, to see being responsible. I am responsible for myself. But this is the end rather than the beginning.

There is a particular aspect of growing up which started me off on this inner trajectory of my inquiry. This aspect has been my difficulty to hear criticism. I propose to order the chapter by starting with this aspect as it came to my attention during a supervision group meeting. I write an account of the inquiry process this led me into, which focuses on my response to the death of my father.

I will then recount a dream and my subsequent making sense of it, which leads me to a revision of that response. And I follow this with a discussion of the underlying condition or pre-disposition I have named as “The Gift of Melancholy.”

The chapter closes with an attempt to draw these threads back together again in the form suggested by the Dialectic Thou.

Fragmentations.

If not conquering then at least accommodating to the debilitating effect of anticipating criticism has been a feature of my learning which I see as an important consequence of what I call “growing up.” For this is how it feels. I am less often reduced to a child-like state of tearful hurt which means that I can listen and speak out rather more effectively. This is not so much about “finding voice” as “finding ears” and distinguishing between who I am, what I know and what I do.

“What are the fragmentations that this unity or perfection is intended to satisfy?”

This is a question put to me during a meeting of our supervision group by Jack Whitehead, a member of the CARPP faculty, who had joined us to review my draft MPhil transfer paper in December 1997. The first draft of this section, which I wrote in January 1998, was an attempt to respond to that question.

There were other questions, too, posed by Judi Marshall, which severely challenged my composure. And my composure was none too good to start with. For, at the time I was keen to get some reassurance that I was making progress on the writing of my MPhil transfer paper.

(Do I just need to describe the CARPP process to place this statement in context? Essentially CARPP operates through a progression of stages towards the submission of a PhD thesis. The first stage is the submission and examination of a

Diploma transfer paper after the first, taught year of the programme. Success at this stage leads on to registration for an MPhil and normally the expectation is for participants to submit a longer and more thoroughly researched document, an MPhil transfer paper after a further year or so. Again, success at this stage leads on to registration for a PhD. The supervision group of the faculty member responsible for one's progress and a number of peer participants meet regularly throughout this process. At the particular meeting of the supervision group I refer to above, in December 1997, Jack Whitehead had been invited to offer a second view from the faculty of the work that I had by then written for my MPhil transfer paper. I had specifically requested feedback on the quality of my work, for the MPhil assessment is essentially based on a view that the work is of potentially PhD standard. I was particularly exercised about what I needed to do to, especially in methodological terms, to pass that particular hurdle).

I approached the meeting, I remember, in a mood typical of my dealings with what I saw as "academic authority." I thought I was writing a potentially important thesis in an interesting way. I feared that I was "wasting my time" so far as its academic rigour was concerned, that I was failing. This mix of grandiosity and failure compounds to form a sort of defiance which I have learned to subvert into an apparent openness to the discussion, which I hear as criticism.

I certainly heard it, criticism, at the meeting. And my hearing of the criticism did not allow me to hear much else. I left with a sense of the failure I had pre-disposed myself to feel.

My subsequent learning is about interrupting that familiar childish pattern and substituting a more grown up capacity to listen, fully, to what others are saying about my work. And I have been learning about how to re-write the 'script' in my head which otherwise catapults me back into constraints determined by a child-like response.

I decided to try and interrupt the pattern by sitting down and 'really' listening to the tape recording of the supervision group conversation. Donna sat with me as she had offered to help me to listen to what was being said, or asked. Her gift was to take the time to suggest what the intention of the feedback might be, so that I could hear the undertone, as it were, rather than react in the defensive routine which led me not to hear.

I often now invoke, in situations in which I feel I might be caught out by my predisposition to feel criticised, Donna's voice at my ear slowing me down to take in

the whole message. I am much more likely, as a consequence, to ask the supplementary question that she might have asked, before launching into a premature defence.

But in order to learn this practical strategy, it seems, I had to go through what I describe as my re-searching process. I had to find and make the connections which Jack's question posed for me. I am describing here a learning loop which started from the practical

- >how to listen well
- > to a deeper reflection of the underlying tendency or pre-disposition
- > to making sense of this for myself in a new 'story'
- > which then enables me to adopt a new, practical strategy.

I started, then, by re-listening. As I did so I noticed that the question, as posed above, seems to arise, almost in the middle of the conversation. Judi had made a comment: "And what is the process through which you are engaging with this? There is just this edge, do you want to show us things which are just so beautiful - - - that it is beyond criticism? Are you willing to live in the field of incompleteness, loose ends, uncertainty, hesitancy - - - for this is crucial to the form of leadership you seem to be talking about - - is there something about the perfection of the product, not showing its workings?" (Judi Marshall on tape, December 1997)

To this Jack added: "I have a feeling that this has been created in response to a fundamental tension - that there was something not in existence before this was created - something to do with a unity that you've created here, so there was a fragmentation before and this has emerged in response to particular kinds of questions or inquiries - now those tensions or fragmentations have been responded to in this way." (Jack Whitehead on tape, December 1997)

(I realised that I was, as I subsequently revised the early accounts of this inquiry, probably taking these questions out of context, for they were really addressing questions of method and presentation. But when I turned to the tape early in January 1998 I heard a different form of the question, or a different level of it perhaps. I had a sense as I reflected that the fragmentations of my own life were significant for the way I presented myself and my work).

So, what are the fragmentations in my life, I wondered?

I decided to search back through my journals and files for the autobiographical answer to Jack's question.

(This is, I believe, a significant aspect of my inquiry process. As I have suggested earlier, I feel that my initial, 'poetic drafting' contains some kind of meaning that it may take some considerable time, and re-work, to assemble into an understanding. I was interested to re-trace my telling of the story to myself, as I had documented it in my journals, day by day. In this reflexive way, I believe, I have the possibility to 'draw out' the undelying meaning into a state in which I can begin to see other choices of being through a different perspective. My story (his-story) gradually alters in tone, really. My perspective shifts its distance rather like adjusting a zoom lens to a more distanced focus.

I have suggested that this process continues in my subsequent revisions. The difficulty of writing this in any contemporary sense, as I discussed in my preface, is that it is too easy to leap to the 'present' conclusion. Living inquiry, as I am experiencing it through revisionary reflection, is never ending. But at some point the learning process reduces in terms of its energy into a state in which 'being' takes over from 'becoming').

In my re-search I re-discovered a letter dated 9th January 1994 addressed to Geoffrey Cornelius, an hororary astrologer I was at that time consulting, ostensibly to provide material for my book.

(This refers to my novel, *Ham Stone*, which awaits the completion of this writing task before I can return to it).

This particular letter and its timing caught my attention. I cannot easily explain the feeling of "knowing" that I was on the right track. I have tried, in the first chapter, to describe the psychic quality of this way of knowing. It informs me bodily. And I want to try and retain something of the quality of my first draft response, which re-produced elements of the letter:

"In anticipating our meeting I have the notion of divination in my head. I notice three thoughts recurring:-

One is that Hamlets Mill (a book he had recommended) makes absolute sense, appealing to my sense of awe at the mystery of life and our presumption to reduce it and explain it;

the second is that I have entered the pit, at last, which takes the form of the iron lung in which my father died. I entered this place on Saturday 27th November 1993 at 12.30pm. I am convinced that as an eight year old child I entered this place in the middle of the night during a huge thunderstorm which cut the power from the machine for a

desperate few minutes. I pleaded with my father not to die, to let me take his place. But he did die, I can now be sure, at half past midnight on the 14th March 1955.

the third is that I am pretty desperate in the place between love and deceit. I remember vividly your expectation that the balance that I had struck in my life between my established family, wife, children, home, stability and so on and my soul partner, my spiritual partner, my secret love on the other would come under intolerable pressure in the early part of this New Year." (RL letter to Geoffrey Cornelius, 9/1/94)

I choose, then, to go back to that date I mentioned in the letter to Geoffrey, Saturday 27th November 1993 at 12.30 pm. This was a crucial moment in my therapeutic process which took me back to an earlier moment, 00.30 am, 14th March 1955. My journal entry notes:-

"At the time of writing this in November 1993 I am aware of the iron box I have created for myself and into which I have stored and locked away the emotions of this time - the time of my father's death. I still fear to tap into them for they feel so highly charged with energy and so full of pain. I recognise that much of the anger, rage even, that I use in willing my actions is leaking from this source. What are those lines of William Blake?

*In every cry of every Man
In every Infant cry of fear,
In every voice in every ban
The mind-forged manacles I hear.*

(ban is defined as a curse supposed to have supernatural sanction in this meaning)

On this transformational day I finally smashed those manacles, to discover inside an Iron Lung an intensity of love and of loss quite beyond my previous level of comprehension.

Such love, so much love for my father and so much pain, such uncomprehending pain at his loss. Why? Why?

The realisation that inside this cage I had constructed was less the anger that I had anticipated, especially at my mother for her part in denying me the chance to mourn his death, nor so much the charge of rage, but that of love and anguish."

(RL journals, 27/11/93)

Later on, when I was writing my autobiography as part of my training as psychotherapist, my mother wrote to me of the circumstances of my father's death.

She did this quite spontaneously, apparently in response to some psychic connection, breaking a previously long held silence on the subject.

Quoting again, this time from that autobiography:

"I arrived home to find a long letter from my mother describing the forty eight hours it took for my father to return home from an extended and arduous trip in the northern territory (of Uganda where he was the Chief medical Officer), to take to his bed apparently exhausted, to diagnose himself as suffering from polio, to be driven the twenty miles to hospital in Kampala, to be placed in the life support machine - the iron lung - which during the Sunday night of an outrageous thunderstorm lost the power to sustain his breathing as the electricity failed, for agonising minutes before the emergency system started up. By this time it was almost certain that his limbs and brain had been damaged beyond repair and in the morning the doctor asked my mother for her agreement to turn the machine off, for by this time it was the machine that was breathing and no longer the person who had been my father.

By that Monday evening he was buried - - - "

(RL Psychosynthesis autobiography, 1994)

In a later episode of my psychotherapeutic process I entered that lung, breathless and fearful, lying on the floor. As I left the present reality and returned in some way to my eight year old self lying in bed that Sunday night, I knew for certain that I had been psychically present at the time the thunderstorm struck. I became aware in this re-construction of two orifices, two openings. Towards one I stretched my right arm, out and up, to a place where I saw my father just desperately out of reach, climbing up and away from my sight. To the other I stretched my left arm, out at a right angle to the line of my body, horizontal. This was the way out into the world, into the material life, which I followed, unable to take the place of my disappearing father, which I so desperately wanted to do. Out I went, alone, into a hostile world, keeping the lid firmly on the iron cage.

And for many years I ignored both the memory of my father's death other than as a dull weight and the significance of that right arm stretching towards - well - some spiritual quest or enlightenment.

But gradually I was invaded by a dissatisfaction with the way I was leading my life and particularly a sense that I had sacrificed some creative force for the safety of a conventional and secure life-style, conforming to the injunction of my mother "to be a good, and sensible, boy!"

I had, at an earlier stage in my psychotherapeutic process, also investigated various episodes of separation from my mother. They are less relevant to the particular story line that I am pursuing here, but they added up to a more general sense of 'separation' as an issue. My autobiography contains reflections of both earlier and later separations:-

“the painful separation of birth, re-lived in another therapeutic setting, holding my head to stop the awful pain inflicted by forceps which were eventually brought to bear to tear me away from the comfort of the womb. Not so long after, I felt the significance of my mother's eminently practical decision to 'abandon' me to my grandparents' care as she took off in the final stages of carrying and then giving birth to my brother, to whose competition I returned some time later. And later still, in my crucial adolescent years, I went quiet through the period of my mother's second marriage which took her back to Uganda, disrupted the little family which had by then been rather well established in Devon, and left us to the special qualities of expatriate English public school life.”

Enough of inner, perhaps, except to note that as I re-inquire into the effects of these earlier times and their re-discovery through therapeutic encounters, I realise that I am again thrust into a re-cycling process, another turn of the learning wheel, particularly in pursuit, this time, of my evasions, my difficulty in hearing and an apparent quest for perfection.

(I wonder, as I re-produce this section in its original form, what you might make of it. My relation to that event, my father's death and the subsequent upheavals it caused, is a crucial measure of my learning and my capacity to engage with the world. My claim for learning, for growing up, is somehow holding open the knowledge of the many elements of that story, for it is a re-construction, a particular way of viewing an event, which in my living my life takes on the power of a defining myth. The particular learning I realised through my therapeutic raw-search was of the quality of love and loss that lurked in that tomb previously unopened for fear of the black stuff of anger and despair. During my research I have learned that these can live together, alongside one another. And I have learned that in this wider open knowledge, this deeper awareness, I have choices, particularly the choice to be aware of but not bound by the significance of that event.

As a training therapist I became interested in the notion of “brief therapy.” I aimed for a practice in which I would guide my client into enough realisation of the

archaic basis for their present predicament coupled with counsel about the choices now facing them as 'adult'.

I am relating here a similar process of learning, the outcome of which is choice. This is my experience. I have tried, to some extent, to carry this learning into my practice as developer and coach. As teacher I feel I have had to learn another lesson, which is that I have something to say and the grounds on which to say it.

I feel I need to complete this section about fragmentation with an account of the choices I made at the end of the raw-search. These choices were a bid for freedom from the constraints of responsibility I had placed on myself. Unfortunately they affected others, most obviously my first wife.

I am conscious, once again as I now comment on my commentary in the 'final' revision, that I am faced with a choice here about how far to extend this story telling into the complexities of my story at the time. In introducing the person of my first wife as victim, somehow, of the eventual choice I was to make, I am alluding again, as I did in the Florentine section of my first chapter, to a more complex set of relationships. In the end I have decided to include the complexity for the way it includes the depth of my emotional state and the route I have discovered for expressing it. In learning terms the suggestion that I am making, in effect, is that the kind of shift in perception that I am trying to describe here, a re-framing or shift in my perceptual ground, is supported or induced by substantial emotional energy. And in my case I find a way of channeling or capturing this learning through a 'presentational' form which typically includes the poetic.

I want to continue to tell the story as I first re-told it to myself in my journal. There might be an evasion here, for it is a typically elliptical and condensed account. But, in truth you do not need the actual detail. And I want to maintain the references to horary divination, for we are still on the trail of the connection between the melancholic and the saturnine, which lurks underneath the more episodic aspects of my story. Our attention is focused on the attentional phrase "compassion and responsibility").

If we just return to my letter to Geoffrey Cornelius for a moment, there were three elements contained in the opening paragraphs.

The first thought was about "Hamlets Mill" and the mystery of life, which I think I should properly address later when I discuss my scholarship, in the second section on 'what I know.'

The second thought was about my entering the iron lung in which my father died. I have adequately rehearsed the consequences.

The third thought was about a desperate place between love and deceit.

“In the New Year of 1994, **as predicted**, my deceit was discovered.

It was predicted in Geoffrey’s horary divination, that there was a build up of astrological forces which would prove intolerable. And I predicted it, unconsciously, in the explorations in my journal at the time. I was reading and writing about Saturn.

My research had led me to Blake. I had been delighted to find the poem I quoted from earlier. The last line spoke directly to my sense of liberation from the iron lung:

“The mind-forged manacles I hear.”

That the manacles were forged by mind spoke to my sense of awakening emotions, so long trapped, it seemed, by thought. In truth I had been enjoying a liberating affair for some years, an affair which I described to myself as soul enriching. But the time for reckoning had arrived. And I was plunged into another fragment of Blake’s work (which I think must come from his notebooks, I failed to note the reference at the time). The fragment is headed ‘How to know Love from Deceit’ and goes:-

“Love to faults is always blind
Always is to joy inclined
Lawless wingd and unconfind
And breaks all chains from evry mind.

Deceit to secrecy confind
Lawful cautious and refind
To everything but interest blind
And forges fetters for the mind.”

(William Blake, reference unknown)

In two short verses my life, it felt, was laid bare.

Where was the bridge between joy and despair here? What possible combination of compassion and responsibility could I act out – what guidance does this guiding principle offer?

The events which followed the discovery of my deceit can be summarised quite simply. The living of them was not quite so simple.

I tried – we, my first wife and I, tried – to re-pair our marriage and it held for one more, our twenty-fifth, year. But then it collapsed, quite suddenly, as a result of the meeting at Schumacher which will feature again in the story of “The piper at the Gates of Dawn.”

I consider that the cracks and fissures which were opened up years before, in the early days of raw-searching, were finally torn apart, and I enacted the separation.

In a curious way I learned to be bad. Or I learned that I was bad. In a fundamental way, at the core of the responsible self I always imagined, as father and husband, I failed.

I thought I did my best, in truth, as father anyway.

In the same way that opening up the tomb of my father’s death had exposed me to a rich complexity of emotions, so my separation and divorce forced me to see myself in a different way. It enriched, curiously, my emotional palette.

My thought, then, is paradoxical. The fragmentations which still catch me out are archaic, laid down in my early experiences, better understood through my personal therapy, certainly, but still active, like ancient rumblings which erupt, briefly but powerfully, from time to time. Some combination of emotions stirs them up. The paradox is that a part of my ‘strengthening’ process was a separation I initiated, a fragmentation I caused. But in the acting, somehow, I learned that I could survive and thrive. I am stronger for having stirred up my own dirt and this emotional learning is constituted of love and deceit and much else besides.

(I am struck by the almost ‘throw-away’ quality of the statement: “But in the acting, somehow” Surely this is what I struggle to help people with – therapy clients, students, coaching clients. My aim is to help them see themselves and their situation clearly enough to act out of choice, taking responsibility for themselves. But what I am experiencing through this revision process is the murkiness of the seeing. It is not clear at all. Or, at least, it may become clear, eventually, much later. At the time, it seems to me, which is why I have tried to keep the essence of some of these earlier accounts, the seeing is partial but elemental. What I mean is that some force seems to get stirred up which probably adds confusion, but then out of this choice is possible. Action is possible.

I am now excited by the possibility that it is this murky sort of stirring that I have been naming, intuitively for years, as ‘alchemical.’ The notion I have of alchemy

has this quality of stirring up the negredo, the black bile, and illuminating it with shafts of mercury, out of which a lightening, a possibility occurs.

I have a sense, as I continue to revise, of the murkiness I have been alluding to shifting and settling. The process of re-revision, gaining a further distance from my story, helps firm up the new perspective to which the earlier reflections gave birth. The shoots are stronger now. I am more grounded when it comes to hearing potentially critical commentary, especially from men who I might previously have cast into a fatherly role. I am less likely to make that transference and plunge into a childish response as a consequence. This is psychotherapy at work, one might say.

But the other learning for me is beyond the awareness raising of the therapeutic process. There is a quality of having lived with the consequences of choosing, being faced with the actual consequences rather than hypothetical possibilities, which strengthens the learning experience for me. It is, I suppose, an experience, with all its complex emotions. There is a completion to the learning cycle and another beginning looms).

I wish to include more of the 'grounding' first draft material to capture the mysterious quality I notice in this early stage of the learning process. In this particular case this quality was truly 'dream-like'. I had a 'significant' dream and went through a process of trying to 'make sense' of it.

Son of Fire-Arse Bids to Enter the Academy.

The first draft of this section, which now seems to fit here, was written in January 1999. The significance of this is that I had been having serious doubts, in December 1998, about continuing with my PhD project. I had declared to my supervision group that I intended to re-consider, over the Christmas break, whether or not to continue. I was not sure that the effort I was putting into my research was matched by the outcome, somehow. I wondered if I was diverting my energies in a fruitless task.

The dream, Son of Fire Arse bids, which I want to try and re-tell as faithfully as I can, seemed to arrive at my moment of doubt and to offer a really good reason to continue. It clarified my purpose.

I find it particularly hard to capture the quality of a dream. Its essence is somehow slippery. I was particularly helped by discussing the dream with Donna during a blustery walk along the cliff paths the following morning. I have decided to re-produce here my first, rapid draft after that walk, as a way of trying to maintain something of the inspiration of the moment.

“Two evenings ago we, my wife and I, visited the old farmhouse further down the lane for a Boxing Day party. Almost as soon as we were through the door, it seemed, we were introduced to another guest, an old man, who is just on the point of leaving his own farm a little further up the valley, a little earlier than he had planned, he told us, as a consequence of a series of coincidences. He had intended to leave when he was eighty, in a couple of years' time. His wife seemed happy enough to be going, but the old man, well, it finally meant he was no longer a farmer, that seemed to be the meaning.

But already by this stage in the conversation, probably as a consequence of the way we were introduced, he had announced that he knew my father at school. Indeed he had lived just round the corner from my grandparent's house, as a boy, and remembered my grandfather, too, who was chairman of the School Governors, often making speeches and handing out prizes.

This was good news, for me, to meet someone who could, as it were, seal the sense of connection that had brought me back to this little corner of the South Hams, a long held dream to return "home". We spent much of the evening indulging Bill's passion for reminiscence, delving into his capacious memory of local history, a novelist's dream source. As we circled the party, he kept saying, "You know I knew his Dad", each time adding to my sense of belonging.

But the moment that resonated most strongly was his instant, delighted recall of my father's nickname - FireArse. Bill was clearly transported back in time to when he was, perhaps, fourteen, recalling an older boy, a school prefect who had nicked him for smoking Woodbines on the school trip to the engineering works at Swindon. He could not remember, or maybe never knew, the derivation of the name, but there was in his telling of the story a still significant charge of emotions, difficult to untangle. "He was a clever boy, you know, so not much liked," was one telling statement, a mixture of respect and being different in his tone.

We separated on excellent terms, determined that we should introduce my mother to old Bill and his wife next time she visits, for she may well remember them from the time she also lived, briefly, just round the corner from my grandparents after my father died.

Yesterday morning I woke carrying a vivid dream. I had been drawn into a conspiracy with a couple of old friends into setting fire to the perimeter of a property owned by a local tyrant. We surrounded the fence with some kind of hose into which we pumped a combustible chemical compound. I was engaged on the pump, I recall, as a way of helping in this project thought up by my two friends. We then set a fuse and made our way to our car to escape the scene.

At this stage I get confused by the dream sequence and what may have been waking thoughts. I certainly remember being afraid of exposure and capture, so tried to find a way of getting away from what may have been an island as quickly as possible. I also recall thinking how stupid we were. If this man we were tormenting was as concerned for his privacy and safety as we seemed to think, he would surely have his perimeter fence guarded in some way, probably by closed circuit TV. We would certainly be captured on film. Indeed he may be in his lair now, watching us in amusement, ready to pounce as we make our retreat.

At this point a security guard appeared driving an enormous dump truck and scooped our car up into its bucket, the driver sitting way up in the cab smiling at our feeble efforts to flee.

As I sat to recapture my dream, prompted rather forcibly by Donna to take it seriously as significant to my PhD, I noticed a mixture of emotions toward the tyrant. I was certainly scared of his capacity to find us but I was also rather sad about his need for such precautions and the fear and dislike he evoked.

In terms of an "interpretation", I was interested in the notion that he represents some shadow side of myself, which I set out to harm or kill, but ended up feeling rather sorry for. But maybe the perimeter fire has another possibility, which is in some way to liberate this aspect of myself and bring it into a more integrated state.

As I walked the cliff paths during the morning I formulated, in that magical way the act of walking seems to have, a story. This is the story of Son of Fire-Arse making a bid to stand alongside his father as scholar. The thesis which follows is

that bid, an attempt to capture a coherent argument that existing members of the academy will judge as sufficient grounds to award an entry permit to.”

Now, somehow, I have to draw out the threads of my interpretation of the dream in such a way as you can make at least some sense of the connections. Of course you cannot “know,” in the same way as I did then, that the dream was a signal to go on. Nor could I possibly persuade you of the significance of the liberating fire and the feelings I had towards the “tyrant.”

I suggest a good place to start is with purpose, for which the key word is “scholar”.

During the supervision group meeting at which I first raised my doubts about continuing on the 14th December 1998, I spoke about my bid to enter the academy. In doing so I referred to seeming to have to “twist myself into some uncomfortable shape” to deliver the kind of evidence necessary for success, and that maybe I was diverting effort and energy away from my “real” work, which is the writing of my novel. But I was not wanting to make a decision, and certainly not wanting to make a decision to quit, for there is a point to my bid which is captured in the tone of my statement, “there is something about wanting to be recognised as a scholar.”

I am drawn to the significance of the particular word, which has resonated through my period of research. Indeed it has often seemed a more fitting word than research for what I have been doing.

I have my own definition for scholarship, which is captured on the tape recording of that supervision group meeting: “Scholarship is something about my capacity to understand, marshall and sustain an argument. I well appreciate that in order to be recognised as a suitable member, my argument needs to be of a quality that in some way passes the entry test to the academy.”

I noted in my journal, as I was trying to unravel my dream, two of the definitions of ‘scholar’ from the OED. The first, which seemed most relevant at the time, is “a learned or erudite person orig. esp. in the classics, now in languages, literature, or any non-scientific subject, an academic. Also a person who is able to read and write.” This seemed to capture pretty accurately my definition, for as I continued on that tape extract I said: “I want to read and learn the stuff that I didn’t read and learn earlier in my life, things like philosophy, aesthetics and so on, the edge of science and spirituality. And I want to be able to present it and sustain an argument in it.” So, I want to be able to read and write the stuff I feel I missed out on earlier in my life, the

non-scientific stuff, for I studied science subjects to A level and engineering at university. These were "practical" options, a responsible choice.

And then I wrote, in a bracket in my journal, another definition, "a student who in reward for academic merit is given financial support for education by a school, college or university." As my father was, in fact. He gained scholarship entry to Oxford, a distinction and marker of merit which has clearly shadowed my life, perhaps particularly as I know so little of him, that which I do know takes on an added significance. The clever boy Bill remembered went "up" to Oxford, read medicine and became a noted and decorated specialist in tropical medicine.

I know 'of him' somehow far better than I know him. And I have never felt worthy of my father, as scholar. (Or the equal of him, you might say.)

(I am noticing, in this final revision, some quality of learning which goes beyond awareness raising. The conclusion I have reached at this point, the recognition of feeling unworthy of my father, one could see as a typical learning, or awareness, fostered by a therapeutic process. Indeed, I have described such a process, reviewing my dream with a therapist, in this case Donna, and reporting it into my journal. My account continues in this way for a while longer).

As I walked the cliff path, the shadow figure to which we had tried to set fire took on other possible meanings, the shadow of my father's merit, the shadow of my consequent need to be practical and responsible, my mother's elder boy, which led me away from my love of literature into science and engineering and thence management. I was making choices on the basis of what would serve my sense of responsibility well, that I could take care of myself and others, securely. And I considered my scope limited by my relative limitations in scholarship.

The idea of liberation from that good and responsible boy, the exaggerated sense of responsibility, was an interesting alternative to the destruction implied by the Ring of Fire.

Which got me thinking about that curious nickname, Fire-Arse.

In historical terms, of course, the nickname could have any number of trivial origins. But in Bill's telling of it, and my subsequent dream, FireArse takes on a particular quality of energy.

Again I turn to the dictionary to see if there is any particular connotation. The first definition of fire is "originally from the Greek. The active principle operative in combustion, manifested as a hot bright shifting body of gas or as incandescence - one of the four elements of the ancients -"

In a way that words keep turning up, 'incandescence' holds a charge for me which is, somehow, alchemical. Incandescence is a particular form of 'illumination'. Illumination is the quality of seeing which informs this second, later stage of my research. It has a steady, penetrating quality to it. Incandescence somehow informs the earlier stage, rage, despair and hope in a furnace, an alchemical crucible.

Then I turn up 'arse', a rather dispiriting series of definitions, but just an eye's stretch away is 'arsonist' - "The malicious setting of fire to - - -"

I feel that the connection is, in some way, complete. In order to claim my place as "Son of FireArse", I need to set fire to the constraints which bind me, the sense of my impotence as the practical one, the tyranny of responsibility. This shadow, indeed, I would set fire to, and in many ways, in the choices I have as "life-leader" made, I have.

But I need, too, to liberate the shadow of FireArse the meritorious one, to burn down that perimeter fence which has held him in separation, in awe, to join him and others.

My purpose, then, in proceeding, is of liberation. I want to respect but not be caught up by that responsible youth, too young for such responsibility. And I want to claim my place alongside my father, that I, too, have merit. I have that possibility and this is my bid.

Any interpretation of a dream is necessarily a "story" in the sense of "made up." But the energy I recall from the re-telling along our cliff walk, the researching in the sense of writing it up in my journal, the making sense of it through the trail of connections; all this suggested to me an important possibility. Growing up is growing in to my own capacities, without comparison.

It now seems to me that my 'bid' has to be on my own terms. In a curious way it has to be an "irresponsible" bid. By this I mean it has to be a bid which is not limited by my sense of my intellectual or, particularly, academic capability. I have to find my own way rather than imitate some established pattern.

(And here is the half-learned response, in my revised estimation. There is an adolescence in the rebellion of "irresponsible." This is where awareness raising had got me to by the penultimate revision. I had a 'story-line' established which led me to half

accept the imaginative death of my father, and substitute in some way a continuing ambivalence towards 'the academy.' I will go on to revise and edit what became a long methodological chapter consequent upon that ambivalence. I hope that in this final revision I can find a new, grown up voice with which to make my claim, finally, to enter through the door which has taken on this significance for me. And, of course, as all good myths attest, I will only be able to enter when the entry has lost this charge. I become as good as my father the moment I am no longer attached to the issue. I am ready for the academy when I no longer need it so much.

The quality I am trying to establish here in my thinking is the second stage of the learning process, beyond the therapeutic awareness raising I mentioned in my comment on the previous page. I am now ready to choose, in an adult way, how I approach my entry to the academy. I need be neither the 'responsible' child nor the 'irresponsible' adolescent. At least I hope that I may now revise the next chapter without feeling the consequences of my ambivalence. But in the meantime there is the third element of this chapter to complete, which has also been troublesome throughout my previous revisions. There is an elusive quality I liken to melancholy underlying much of my introspective inquiry. It, too, has shifted).

Harmony and the Gift of Melancholy.

(I feel the need to frame this third element of my account of my introspective inquiry. It is at the edge of my present 'awareness' and has, therefore, the murky quality I alluded to earlier in the dream interpretation. In a way a statement I made earlier in the chapter, which is that I have adopted 'a deprived response to relationships' is a good starting point. The story I had told myself, which was my way of coming to terms with my father's death, enabled me to maintain relationships at a certain distance, thus protecting me from the consequences of separation. This is my therapeutic story. And I have named for myself this deprived quality as melancholy. I have valued my melancholy as a survival gift. And I have conjectured, in the pages of my thesis in earlier drafts, that this gift has enabled me to empathise with many people I have met who have also been subjected to the ravages of separation at some crucial point of their lives. And I have gone further to suggest, to myself and the audience of my thesis, that this gift enables me to feel, to be sensitive to, that aspect of our present culture which is also marked by separation.

I have a self-image, at some level, of being a sensitive and melancholic writer. I see myself as a novelistic novelist. And I can see myself seeing myself in this way. I can read the ensuing narrative as an attempt to confirm myself in this image. And I think that where I am in my reflexive process, which is informing this revision, is a further step in the awareness raising process. I am both respectful of this aspect of my self-image and doubting its hold over me. I am struggling to surface choicefulness out of the murky appreciation. Let me return to the previous draft, which started from the same supervision group conversation that I quoted from in the section on fragmentations. On this occasion, though, I concentrate my reflections on Judi's question).

Judi asked: "And what is the process through which you are engaging with this? There is just this edge, do you want to show us things which are just so beautiful - - - that it is beyond criticism? Are you willing to live in the field of incompleteness, loose ends, uncertainty, hesitancy - - - for this is crucial to the form of leadership you seem to be talking about - - - is there something about the perfection of the product, not showing its workings?"

I am, once again, taking the question out of context or, rather, extending the context beyond the point originally intended. But that is where my attention takes me.

My attention on Judi's question is less on the aspect of criticism – that it is beyond criticism – and more on the perfection of the product. My 'performance dilemma,' as I think of it, particularly in relation to writing, is manifested in a level of distress because I am not able to produce perfection. Well, if not perfection, then a quality of work which is clear in my head and feels to be beyond my capability.

I would like to dip into the world of astrology once again, for I have found the idea of a "Saturnine temperament," somewhat helpful. My starting point is again in the work that I was doing with Geoffrey Cornelius, to which I referred earlier in this chapter.

We originally met, Geoffrey and I, at the Convivium of Archetypal Psychology in Florence. I was most interested in the style of astrology Geoffrey spoke about which is a form of divination, horary astrology. He defines this as "the art of judgement of a horoscope for the moment a question is posed to or by an astrologer."

I had intended to include some aspect of astrology in my novel, *Ham Stone*, much in the way that Lindsay Clarke had introduced alchemy as a defining aspect of his great work, *"The Chymical Wedding."* I already had a character in mind to give voice to

this aspect. This particular form of astrology appealed to my sense of the connection between me, as represented by my thoughts, emotions and will to action, and some wider world beyond which operates according to different time scales and concerns, an archetypal realm. I remember Geoffrey talking about an inter-mediate level of guide as 'daemon,' not quite an angel nor a God, but somehow accessible just beyond the human realm. I have often felt such a presence.

I decided that a way to educate myself sufficiently in this field was to consult Geoffrey, as it were for real, on moments in my life. In parallel I created moments in the lives of the principal characters in the book. Geoffrey would consult me on both and I frantically took notes on what seemed to be the most astounding range of references and connections.

On the reverse of my copy of the letter to Geoffrey I quoted from earlier are a series of such cryptic notes taken during such a session:-

"Iron Lung - Saturn/Pluto square, as in 1955, declares the crisis of Saturn/Pluto still very stuck, holding down, constraining Pluto - somehow corrupting the idealism - - - - what's Uranus, the sky God of thunderstorm doing-----a Uranus/Jupiter conjunction - - - - so it's like I arrive in the thunderstorm to kill him? - to take something from the moment with me - and I'm back in the iron lung again, with him, to try and re-discover this gift, this transfer - - - "

I remember well the thread of these conversations with Geoffrey. We used to talk about how to release a constrained creative impulse under what he described as a Saturnian spell - which is to require perfection.

Hence my interest in the Saturnian temperament and that particular "Saturn/Pluto square" which occurred at the time of my father's death.

I found Geoffrey a particularly stimulating teacher at this time because we shared a common basis in Jungian psychology which helped inform our discussions about the nature of divination. I have another note taken at this time which now seems completely appropriate to this chapter:-

"the ruthless necessity to separate from and bury my father - otherwise - misplaced idealism - - "

It took some further years before I was prepared, in my dream world anyway, to be sufficiently ruthless with the Ring of Fire which liberated Son of Fire-Arse.

(I feel the same 'performance dilemma' with the scholastic aspect of my research at this moment. In my mind's eye I would have become expert in the sophistications of astrology and alchemy, able to comment with real precision on the different aspects of the Saturnine phenomenon I am trying to fathom. I notice, during this final revision, some notes I made at the time I was consulting Geoffrey on different forms of Fire as represented in alchemical notions of therapy. For instance, a passage which seems significant in the aftermath of the Fire-Arse dream: *"Some resistances in therapy have to be melted slowly over time in the warmth of the therapeutic alliance (empathy). Other resistances need conflagration, a burning out in encounter and confrontation. Then we need to focus on what is produced, on the residues, the ashes, the left-overs."* This note is taken from a set of handouts I must have collected at a meeting of the Convivium, the author unknown. In a way I could see this as a description of the process I have described as a period of raw-search, a conflagration ending in encounter and confrontation, followed by a subsequent investigation of the residues in my research.

The notion of 'distance' as I have used it in these reflexive asides is included in the alchemical view of therapy. Distancing is cooling off in space as well as time. Keeping away from the hot spots, the potential flare-ups, the heated debates, the conflagrations. But distance in alchemical terms does not imply coldness, however, as congelation can happen within relative warmth. James Hillman refers in his "In-Search" to "distance without coldness" in counselling practice.

My excitement about re-turning to these notes I made years ago is the confirmation they offer me that I have a valid case for likening the particular processes of 'learning' that I am researching to the alchemical version of therapy. I enjoy the resonance between my experiential discoveries and this ancient theory. Another note refers to what I feel I am expressing here as the reflexive re-search turn of the bumpy learning wheel: *"Allowing to Settle Out – allowing a fixity to show itself. Not rushing into things too quickly after a heated period. Something may be held in suspension through heating that only shows when the heat is removed, and things are allowed to settle. Out of the supersaturated solution comes a crystallisation or a precipitate. The congelation, in crystallising, may show specificity, particular things settling out as specific insights, critical connections, clarities, definitions and order. A crystallisation may be a once uncertain and moveable feast of jelly now hardening into clarity and order, the solidity reflecting a definite choice based upon relative emergent values."*

This is taken from the same set of notes, unfortunately un-named.

I feel the resonance of this process of congelation with what I have called learning to make choice, the gradual settling into a new perspective out of a murky re-appraisal. I want to pursue the revision of this section on melancholy with this alchemical process of learning acting as a frame).

There is another note in my journal from my sessions with Geoffrey:

"I feel Geoffrey treating me to a harsh insight into the possibility of my own inaction, frozen by a need for recognition, grandiosity - rather must I discipline myself to make the possibility of creativity - which feels a possibility, just. It might seem to depend on inner work - there's some dark energy to untap, to release"

(RLs journals 17th October 1993)

I was reading "The Saturn/Pluto Phenomenon" by Joy Michand and Karen Hilverson at this time of preparation, referring to both the repressive 'shadow' qualities of this conjunction but also to the possibilities. Another extract which appears in my journal:

"The Saturnine temperament was traditionally sluggish and gloomy, known as 'Melancholia'. But Cornelius Agrippa of Nesheim remarked in his De Occulta Philosophia 1509 that the 'Melancholy fury' stimulated the three highest human faculties: intellect, reasoning and imagination. His observation was that a higher consciousness emerges from darkness. The Saturn energy is a gateway to the choice between restricted and unrestricted consciousness. Frequently, the Saturn experience is the two sides of the same coin: uncompromising demand to produce unlimited blessing.

The Saturn influence must, of necessity, challenge human consciousness to question superficial social existence. The Saturn phenomenon is an indication of potential and a positive force in self-awareness." (Michand and Hilverson)

It seems to me that this passage expresses well the combination of qualities I experience. I have claimed a certain affinity for those with whom I work who experience some level of separation – or fragmentation – as debilitating in some way. Indeed, I have suggested that I might be particularly attuned to the dilemmas of our time, characterised as they are by a fragmentation of mind from matter, head from heart, thinking from sensing, human from the rest of the natural world.

This is a claim to awareness.

But I am also suggesting that this particular process of inquiry, my re-search process, has enabled me to “learn,” by which I mean to have the possibility to act differently. And I hope that as well as learning for myself I am gradually able to turn this appreciation for a learning process into account in my teaching practice.

(I am suggesting here that the two turns of the learning process, the fiery raw-search element followed by the more distanced congelation aspect of reflexive inquiry, are necessary to move from awareness to choice. Or rather, the process proceeds through awareness raising, the illumination of the fire, and then to succeed it needs the more contemplative, relational fixing for choice to emerge supported by a re-framing, a new setting of values.

I am aware, as I proceed through this final revision, re-ordering my earlier material, that I am in pursuit of a re-framing of the notion of melancholia as I have applied it to my own story. It, the melancholic disposition I claimed, has largely dissolved, at least in the constraining sense. I have the choice, it now feels to me, to reconnect with the Saturnine in the depressing sense or to appreciate the gift, not of perfection, but of striving for quality. Let me turn for a moment back to my old teacher, Ficino).

In a letter to his friend Giovanni Cavalcanti, who accused him of complaining too much about Saturn, Ficino replied:

"I accuse a certain melancholy disposition, a thing which seems very bitter unless, having been softened, it may in a measure be made sweet for us by frequent use of the lyre. Saturn seems to have impressed the seal of melancholy on me from the beginning." (Ficino 1981 p. 33)

Here is a specific reference to the connection between Saturn and the melancholic which I was trying to make sense of in what I call my performance dilemma, with which I started this section. It relates to the pursuit of perfection, the thread of research that Judi's question prompted.

But I have done more than just re-search. For the reflexive aspect of the re-search process I am describing as leading (or learning) towards choice, has been at work.

I turn to one more quotation from this rich seam in my journals. This is a description of 'horary divination' which Geoffrey Cornelius uses in his book on the subject. This is Guido Bonatus, a twelfth century source, on "First Consideration before Judgement", which suggests that the moment of horary is a function of human decision:

“Observe what it is that moves a person to propose or ask a question of an Astrologer; where we must take notice of three motions: the First, of the mind, when a man is stirred up in his thoughts and hath an intent to inquire; a Second, of the superior and celestial bodies; so that they at that time imprint on the thing inquired after, what shall become of it; the Third, of the free will which disposes him to the very act of inquiring; for although the mind be moved to inquire, ‘tis not enough, unless the superior bodies sympathize therewith; nor is such motion of the stars enough, unless by the election of his will the person does actually inquire.”(Guido Bonatus 1994: p. 116.)

It requires that “the person does actually inquire, ” and I would say, in order to learn.

The experience I have been using as an exemplar of a learning process which proceeds through the stages of fiery confrontation and fixing congelation, is that of liberating my-self from the habitual constraints I had established as a result of the forced separation from my father. In my raw-searching I faced up to the issue as a child and discovered love. As an adult I re-searched for some new understanding. I became aware of the limitations I imposed on myself as a consequence of feeling inferior to my father, the scholar. And, eventually, I faced his death as an adult. Gradually, in a series of reflexive revisions, I have re-told myself the story to ‘fix’ a new version, one in which I have choice. I can see the death of my father as a melancholic gift. It enables me to empathise with the consequences of separation in a broader context. But I need not be constrained in my performance dilemma. I can release my creative energy, supported by love, out of the iron lung and into a realm of expression.

(And I have a sense, as I complete this re-revised section, of the daemon represented in Redon’s image of the Spirit of the Waters, which is my chosen frontpiece, smiling gently on my struggling for freedom. Incidentally, I will be explaining the inclusion of this image later in my thesis when I turn to Reflection and Expression through Image in chapter 8. For now I want to complete this chapter with a concluding statement and then offer you another image by way of transition from my introspective re-searching to my musings on method. I will introduce the image in my second Interlude).

A Concluding Reflection.

I have been trying to weave together an account of my practice of re-search with its consequences for choice and its illuminations about learning.

I selected three key moments during my research process, the son of fire-arse dream, Jack Whitehead's question about fragmentations and Judi Marshall's question about harmony, as prompts for my inquiry.

The three elements are related to a direct aspect of my learning through inquiry. This is the process I have called 'Growing Up,' largely associated with coming to terms, as an adult, with my father's death.

And there has been a less direct, more problematic aspect of my inquiry. This has been what I think of as my scholarship, in this case into the phenomenon of melancholy as represented in the fields of alchemy and astrology. In a curious way the problematic aspect is contained within the subject of this aspect of my inquiry. For I have perceived my relative failure to know all that I have wanted to know about these subjects as informed by the performance dilemma I associate with melancholia, as informed by the saturnine pursuit for perfection.

I have, as a result of this aspect of my inquiry, arrived at a tentative proposition about the nature of my learning, as I experience it, being related to alchemical formulations of therapy. And in the way that form and function inform one another, the quality I have been inquiring into, my self-imposed melancholic disposition, has gradually dissolved.

In earlier drafts I associated my drive for 'matching' my father as the purpose for completing my thesis as a means to enter the academy and thus prove my worthiness. But in a curious way, as I have pursued liberation from the long shadow of his death, I am no longer so bothered by an external validation.

In a similar way I have associated my growing up with a liberation from a self imposed set of responsibilities to free myself to become creative, especially as a writer.

(This has been my 'presenting issue' in all my therapeutic work dating back to my first sessions with a Jungian psychotherapist in 1990. As I see a possible end to this writing endeavour I can feel a trepidation, perhaps an element of the wobble in my bridge, for re-engaging with my novel. Am I ready yet? The key relationships in my half-written novel, *Ham Stone*, include both father/son, husband/wife/lover and an indirect mothering, somehow always seen from afar. I did not set out to write it this

way, this is the way it has been writing itself. Of course it is also autobiographical to some extent, but it seems to me that in the writing the story takes on a life of its own. There is an archetypal element which somehow enters of its own accord rather than through any particular effort or device. That's how it feels in the writing, anyway. So, when I speak of a transcendent form in this work, my thesis, I think I am seeking something of the same quality. But it takes more effort, somehow, to be both sufficiently precise and clear in the explanation as well as transformative in the expression).§

But interestingly, as I close the chapter my thoughts are infused with a level of satisfaction to be practising increasingly as teacher. I want to be writer, too. But in the same way as I have surfaced, it feels, out from under the shadow of my father so far as scholarship is concerned, I may now, too, be subject to the dissolving properties of inquiry so far as my attachment to be writer is concerned. And as the attachment recedes, maybe, so might the actuality proceed.

INTERLUDE 2: THE APPRENTICE ALCHEMIST.

1ST draft January 2001

2nd draft May 2002

I would like, at this point, to introduce you to an image which has captured for me my sense of myself as re-searcher. I related in the latter stages of the previous chapter, Growing Up, to my interest in alchemy as a metaphor for my learning process.

During a visit to Washington, in the early stages of my re-search, I discovered the work of Wolf Kahn

Kahn excited me initially as a painter of landscape in a way which seemed to resonate with the work of Palmer, for instance, who will feature later in the thesis. He was a rebel, choosing to do figurative work when the 'rule' was to paint abstractions. In a curious way he represents, for me, the liberation of post-modernism in a generative form. Frank O'Hara wrote enthusiastically about Kahn's emerging style:-

"His paintings are very beautiful and very serious; very rich and very sad; very bright and very heavy. he seems to brood over nature at the same time as he presents its exquisite moments. The structure of the picture takes on a personal strength and openness, as if an intimate secret were being divulged, with a warning. His self-portraits of a year ago make this quality quite apparent: the artist is depicted in a bold emotional state, beset on every side by cutting colors, some sweeping into his form, others approaching and passing with the speed of arrows, and his eyes are everywhere upon them at the same time they have an objectivity of emotional statement within the stance which is like a date under a romantic poem: you read a fervent farewell, and the footnote tells you the poet died the next morning at Missolonghi. The "genuineness" of the paintings, their forms and details, no matter what the influence, has a kind of extraneous, compelling conviction In front of one of Mr.Kahn's paintings one is not always in command of oneself or of the experience, and as one sees longer it becomes apparent that an unknown quantity of perception is available to one's flagging

powers, as in nature the hidden secret is partially revealed – or else this is the mysterious quality of painting itself.” (O’Hara 1996: pp. 35-36)

This description of Kahn's painting refers to the time he worked on the self-portrait I am including as a self-reflection I call ‘The Apprentice Alchemist’.

I am thoroughly attracted to the combination of beauty and seriousness in Kahn's work. And this particular image seems to portray the ‘collision’ between inner and outer, the space I will refer to as the imagination. But, in particular, O’Hara’s appreciation captures for me some essence of the work which is about the nature of knowing. He describes the “genuineness” of the paintings partially revealing the secret of nature. This is the mysterious quality I am keen to capture.

I also discovered a relation between the work of Kahn and Turner in the way they use colour. Turner seemed to shift the task of his painting from the description of particular objects and local colours to the colour of space itself. He was the first artist to show that combinations of pure colours create, in their own way, the sensuous reality of light and space. It seems that Kahn, too, developed a means of execution in his painting which has this same transformative effect. This is what I liken to the ‘alchemical’ process.

For me this process is enhanced in the viewing by accompanying an image with a piece of music, as I discussed in Interlude 1.

The music I have selected to accompany the ‘Apprentice Alchemist’ is “The Unanswered Question” by Charles Ives.

As Kahn gazes out of his work room I join him in a question that he asked at art school:

“It seemed less and less likely to me that I would ever reach the impossibly high plateau where I believed true artists lived” – (ibid, p. 22)

My question is – will I write - as a true artist?

CD track 2: “The Unanswered Question” by Charles Ives.

SECTION 2

HOW I LEARN

A DIALECTIC THOU – THE NATURE OF MY INQUIRY.

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2nd draft December 2001

3RD draft May 2002

Introduction.

The twin issues of methodology and practice have been the topics most consistently challenged through Robin's supervision process. This second section of his thesis is his considered response to the challenge around methodology. Section 4 takes up the issue of application to his practice. The topics are linked by Robin's insistence throughout his research to maintain the focus on himself and his learning in a broad 'life' context rather than the impact he makes as a practitioner as perceived from a second person perspective.

The development of this section has been in response to the question – What is the Nature of my Inquiry – and is it Research?

As Robin has inquired more thoroughly into the field of research broadly identified with labels of Quality and Action, he has recognised his chosen research process or method as falling within the boundaries of a first person life inquiry through a reflective practice largely based on writing including the aspect referred to in earlier Dialectic Thous as revisionary reflection.

He has also found, through the philosophical aspect of his scholarship, some support for his continued insistence on maintaining a first person focus.

This section ends, therefore, with Robin's own response to its guiding question in the affirmative. But for most of the period of his research Robin has been caught in a tension between his instinctive, or intuitive, chosen process of inquiry and a sense of potential failure, in academic terms - that it is in some measure 'not good enough', or inappropriate in the particular terms of a PhD degree.

As early as in his Diploma transfer paper Robin was questioning what he saw as inappropriate ideas of validity and evidence in the kind of inquiry he dimly understood

himself to be pursuing. But his approach towards this questioning had a defensive, rebellious quality, which could be described as adolescent.

One measure of Robin's 'growing up' is the extent to which he was able, at a later stage, to inquire into these issues in a more open and engaged way. His MPhil transfer paper showed some preparedness to address his developing clarity around method and the relation between method and validity. But there continued a rebellious tone to the discussion, as though Robin was arguing with some unseen enemy he characterised as 'the academy'. It was not until he recognised himself as at least 'on the edge' of this institution in his role as supervisor of MSc Dissertations within AMOC that he was able to inquire from a genuine position of engaged interest rather than sullen defensiveness.

The presentational task Robin sets for himself, therefore, is to manage some balance between coherence – maintaining an explanatory narrative - and congruence in reflecting the shift in tone associated with his learning process. For this is no polished presentation of a finely argued and pre-meditated methodology, but rather an account of a hard won appreciation for an emerging process of inquiry that Robin now feels prepared to present as valid in the context of his topic.

Validity is his key issue – for his choice of focus and for his chosen methodology. This is the basis of the question, 'and is it Research'? And in a curious way, as his inquiry has become more engaged and open, this question has been re-framed from a challenge directed at the specifics of Robin's research into a question about validity itself.

The approach Robin has taken is to separate his account, as it was first written, into three parts. These can be seen, in storytelling terms, as the beginning, middle and end. Or, in maintaining the bridge metaphor from the first section, the middle piece can be seen as bridging two versions of academy.

Three sections:-

1. "The Imaginative Academy."

This is Robin's idealised version of a learning community based on an imaginary re-construction of Ficino's Neo-Platonic academy in Renaissance Florence.

In the way that Robin has described his dialectic process of splitting one view or idea from another, his Imaginative Academy can be viewed as an expression of the kind of learning community Robin aspires to join in contrast to the academy he sees represented by the literature.

As well as being an idealised vision, Robin's Imaginative Academy contains within it the seeds of his difficulty with, and early rebellious attitude towards what he perceived as the 'traditional' academic virtues of validating knowing.

The Imaginative Academy celebrates expressive and imaginative ways of knowing – the quality of knowing Robin has named 'poetic wisdom.'

2. "The Practical Academy."

The second 'bridging' section is an account of Robin's learning about methodology as a result of his teaching, supervising and assessing for AMOC, the Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting.

The fourth semester of AMOC is a six-month inquiry represented by a 20,000-word dissertation. Robin has been instrumental in establishing and communicating the criteria for the dissertation as the lead member of the faculty on this semester. He has also taught the two workshops devoted to Inquiring on three AMOC programmes and supervised sixteen participants through the process.

It was largely through this 'practical' exposure, as teacher, that Robin began to inquire urgently into his own research method and its validity. Robin recognises that the responsibility he felt as teacher encouraged him to approach the issue in a more 'grown up' attitude than previously.

Robin has discovered this power of teaching as a practice – that it acts as an inducement to learning. In this case it has created the bridge between the adolescence of the Imaginative Academy to the adult Validating Academy.

(Which is not to deny the creative power and potential of adolescent rebellion. Indeed, Robin would argue that a part of his appreciation, through the process of 'growing up', has been for what he recognises to have been a missed opportunity for adolescent creativity in the face of early responsibility.)

3. “The Validating Academy.”

In the third section Robin identifies what he describes as a side-door into the institution he has identified as ‘the academy.’

He has learned to see a portion of the institution as an extended and somewhat quarrelsome family. But as with genetic families, the particular arena populated by Qualitative and Action Inquirers distinguishes itself from the wider institution, or academic tribe. One way in which it maintains this distinction is through a belief in multiple truths and the emancipatory quality of reflective practice as a way of learning. It is this belief, essentially, which prompts Robin to knock on the side door for entry.

In considering his claims for valid knowing, even in this extended and multiple world of knowing, Robin recognises that his is a side door. It is a door which welcomes inquirers into the first person who are concerned about the balance between being and doing in a life well led. Inside the door Robin expects to meet others who are similarly intrigued by the way different ways of knowing are prompted by different presentational forms.

Summary.

An inquiry prompted by defensive concerns for validity has been transformed, through Robin’s reflective practice, into a recognition for the complexities and ambiguities associated with a post-modern, emancipatory concern for knowing. The twinning of the issues of methodology and practice with which this Dialectic Thou opened is, as in the best stories, satisfactorily concluded by Robin’s recognition that his practice as a teacher of practitioners has led him towards a family of educators similarly concerned with issues of valid knowing mediated through different forms of presentation.

CHAPTER 3 - THE NATURE OF MY INQUIRY AND IS IT RESEARCH

PART 1 – THE IMAGINATIVE ACADEMY

1st draft August 1998

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Introduction.

As I suggested in the Dialectic Thou which frames this section, I first approach the issue of methodology as an ‘adolescent’ craving to join an idealised community of learning I describe as my Imaginative Academy.

The process of considering the criteria by which I would recognise this idealised institution feels quite appropriate within the context of the academic field which is concerned for qualitative action inquiry. Bradbury and Reason, in the final chapter of their Handbook on Action Research (2001), address “*choice-points for Improving the Quality of Action Research.*” They refer to Habermas who “*posits that truth results from an emancipatory process, one which emerges as people strive towards conscious and reflexive emancipation, speaking, reasoning and co-ordinating action together, unconstrained by coercion.*” (ibid: p. 447)

I believe that in my own way I have struggled to free myself from the pre-conceptions (pre-judgements) I associated with the ‘academic’. As I will suggest more fully in the third part to this chapter, the Validating Academy, I believe that my choice of method of reflective practice, writing with an appreciation for the power of Imagination, has this emancipatory quality which might well be associated with a kind of adolescent energy. It also, particularly in its revisionary aspect, conveys the striving towards the conscious aspect suggested in the Habermas quotation. I have experienced this as the shift from inner reflection towards outer choicefulness, a liberation.

The vehicle I have formulated for this purpose is an imaginative re-construction of Ficino's neo-platonic Academy in Renaissance Florence. I claim no historical accuracy, for that is not my purpose, nor do I subscribe to the total actuality of that academy as it existed, excluding as it did, for instance, women from its community.

There are four aspects of how I imagine this particular renaissance community of friends might be characterised which I have identified as four criteria for my chosen academy.

I will start with a further introduction to Ficino who figures as a kind of father figure in the neo-platonic 'perennial wisdom.' I wrote of his significance for me in chapter 1.

A further introduction to Ficino.

I am basing my imaginative reconstruction of Ficino's academy on my experience of visiting the Villa Careggi, its home, for the Conference of the Convivium for Archetypal Psychology organised by Noel Cobb and Eva Loewe in 1993. My experience was of a profound recognition – a 'coming home.' I cannot separate the intellectual stimulus I gained from the many fine presentations and conversations that took place during that week, and subsequently, from my sensory reactions to the place and its setting.

I also refer, in particular, to a wonderful article Noel Cobb wrote in the conference edition of *Sphinx* (*Sphinx* 6, 1994), in which he related the meeting of the conference leaders in another Florentine villa. It was this article which alerted me to the notion of 'convivium,' a close inner circle of friends, maybe situated within a wider community. Ficino's academy seems to have had this characteristic of convivium, including as it does the sense of convivial – "*fond of feasting and good company*" (OED). There is an aesthetic quality of convivium which for me combines with the intellectual pursuit of academy in a rich mix well represented by the meetings of the Convivium for Archetypal Studies.

But I suppose the particular aspect of Ficino that resonates for this chapter on my method is his teaching about knowledge. David Boddy in his essay "Marsilio Ficino on Leadership" suggests:

"His (Ficino's) real knowledge came not from books, but from Himself, which was no other than the Self he was talking to. He merely held up a mirror allowing those

with eyes to see and those with ears to hear. His purpose was to be a reflector of divine wisdom.” (Shepherd (ed) 1999)

For Ficino leadership and teacher seemed much the same. And for Ficino knowledge lay within. I am in pursuit of such a knowing through a method I hope to convey as no “mere holding up a mirror,” but a rigorous process of self-inquiry. And although I certainly do not eschew the knowledge from books, I have become increasingly aware that my learning through reading has a circular, or cyclic, quality which is dependent on my self-reflexive practice. The knowledge in books often excites my initial enthusiasm at a kind of ‘poetic’ level of meaning and contact. I often then return to readings some time later for a greater level of ‘understanding’, once I have made more sense for myself of the ideas engaged through my own writing, typically, and teaching often.

Four Qualities of The Imaginative Academy.

The first quality of The Imaginative Academy I want to mention is that of a **community of friends**, an appreciative place in which to pursue learning. My personal experience, and my experience as teacher, has suggested that we thrive, and learn well, in an atmosphere of appreciation and trust. For me a fundamental condition for a good learning environment is one in which there is a sufficient degree of support to enable challenge to be heard.

I call this condition ‘friendship.’ The distinction, for me, of a really good friend is one who I know will support me unconditionally and who will not shirk from offering challenging questions or feedback.

In the conversation recorded by Noel Cobb referred to earlier, there is this passage which seems to relate to this quality:

"I think it is clear," Thomas Ayres said, "that Ficino did not consider his 'Academy' a simple institute of teaching, but a living community of friends, after the model of the Hellenistic philosophical schools. In his letters he explicitly emphasizes friendship as the spiritual tie of the circle of his pupils. Paul Kristeller claims that Ficino is the only thinker in modern times who has tried to found a philosophical school as an intellectual and moral communion between master and pupils. This love between friends, which is the foundation for the communion of the Florence

Platonists, was called amor divinus by Ficino, because it referred to the love of the soul for divinity." (Sphinx 6: p. 85).

This is the **first** criterion which I would adopt for inclusion, a community characterised by 'tough love'. Would I be welcome as a friend amongst friends dedicated to learning from one another?

The **second quality** I want to explicitly emphasise is the spiritual nature of this community. In a subsequent passage of the same reported conversation, Professor Alt is quoted as saying:

"You know I was getting worried about all this talk of love. It makes me uncomfortable. But now I see a way clear - I don't have to love you but I can love 'the divine' in you." (ibid).

In the same way that I chose to study psychotherapy in a form which acknowledged the spiritual dimension, the 'higher unconscious' in the terms of psychosynthesis, so am I wishing to pursue an 'academic' life which is consciously affirming of the spiritual dimension. Indeed, one of the confirming articles Donna invited me to read as I considered applying to the University of Bath's Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP), was Peter Reason's 1993 "Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science".

Reason concludes his article with the thought that *"We are at a time of serious challenge to our secular worldview: wherever we look it continuously misfires. We cannot go back to a medieval participative consciousness, but maybe we can see that that which the mechanical worldview discarded along with a tired Scholasticism – the notion of a living, sacred cosmos – can inform our notions of inquiry so we can develop a new kind of sacred science"* (ibid: p. 282).

This was some kind of clarion call for me to attend with folk, perhaps within a convivium, to the task of generating Sacred Inquiry. Reason suggested that such an Inquiry *"is one path toward a creative experience of our world, which includes experience of the sacred whole, representation of that experience in ways that bring beauty, understanding and framing of that experience in ways that are not alienated, and action and engagement to heal ourselves and our planet."* (ibid: p. 277). This is a particular version or formulation of the extended epistemology I enjoy.

I hope to include what I think of as my spiritual dimension in my being as teacher. And I would like my community of friends to be united by some sense of 'higher purpose',

which might more likely be a broad purpose beyond the bounds of humanity – a more inclusive purpose.

The way in which this quality has become more prevalent in both my working and living practice is through the aspect of ritual. Again I should return to this in my section on practice, but I notice that in the act of communal sharing, however simply this might be framed, a ‘spiritual’ dimension almost inevitably emerges. Perhaps spirituality is an emergent property of community?

(This discussion of spirituality and how I would like to see it in my academic community of friends and in my practice begs the question of what do I mean by spirituality. I was recently (May 2002) tested by a similar question when I presented my thesis to a group of writers and activists who meet monthly at Schumacher College. I tried then to ‘explain’ in rational language what I meant by the notion of ‘essence’. It is in answer to, or illumination of, such questions that I turn to artists. I am not sure whether Beethoven, for example, could ‘explain’ what he might have meant by such a concept but he manages to convey a deep appreciation for what I experience as a ‘spiritual’ dimension in so much of the music that he wrote. But I also connect with this dimension in other ways. It is in the blue of cornflowers, an image I include later in my thesis as an example of my practice as writer. It is an immanent quality of living with a full awareness (if such a condition is possible) for in such an awareness we notice both the constraints and the potential of our many connectednesses).

Anyway, I would like to claim some element of a **spiritual** quality as my second criterion.

The **third** aspect of Ficino's academy that I want to emphasise is the scope and method of the learning. For Ficino and his friends, it seemed, there was an inexhaustible and integral body of learning: astrology and astronomy; philosophy and psychology; history and statecraft; art literature and the sciences; all bound up in the search for divine wisdom and practical action. Wisdom was to be found in the integration

Integration is a theme of crossing the bridge. It is a theme I discovered when searching for modern versions of Ficino's academy. I have felt aspects of it in the community of CARPP, at Findhorn, at Schumacher College and amongst the Archetypal Convivium. I was really interested to read of this integral aspect in the setting out of its heritage and mission by the California Institute for Integral Studies:

"The integral perspective emphasizes nondualism, holism, and evolution; it focuses on completeness rather than fragmentation, and on the unity of polarities such as mind-body, human-universe, masculine-feminine. When put into practice the integral approach assists the individual in making sense of the world and acting effectively on many levels." (CIIS brochure)

Integration is key to me in both the dimension of inter-disciplinary integration and in the sense of integrating inner with outer, an awareness of oneself and one's context in the wider world. And especially this applies to a desire for an integration, a connection, of the human with the rest of nature and with the divine.

There is a **fourth** element to my imaginative re-construction of Ficino's academy which is crucial. This is the aesthetic aspect. Ficino wrote: *"For true love is nothing other than a certain effort of flying up to divine beauty,"* in his "Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love."

According to Ficino, the real knowledge of things lies with their centre in God. Such knowledge comes through love because it is only love that desires things for and in themselves. And it is the love of beauty which is the link between the natural world and the Divine.

In some way it is this integrating philosophy that fired the immense creativity of the Renaissance that I am attempting to re-state in a world which has subsequently experienced the full effects of the separations and distortions initiated by the philosophies of Descartes and Bacon, midwives to the scientific revolution with its rejection of the arts as a legitimate way of knowing.

Somehow to comprehend, fully, this alternative view, it seems to me that we have to turn to forms of artistic expression for their own, as it were, explanation. Hence my use, from time to time, of images and pieces of music.

In Ficino's academy we would be familiar with the search for knowledge through singing, accompanied by the lute. Forays into the garden would not be considered a diversion or rest from learning, but the source of direct knowing through the senses.

At the beginning of the *"Commentary on Iamblichus,"* Ficino elaborates on Iamblichus's reply to Porphyry that knowledge of divine things cannot be attained through rational argument and discourse. In his own attempt to explain the mode of understanding required, he distinguishes between *notio*, or a pre-eminent, intuitive sense innate to the

soul, and *notita*, or conceptual mental activity. It seems to me that “notio” cannot be appreciated by the application of reason, but rather by dissolving into sense making.

And Ficino, who was known among his friends as ‘our Orpheus’, chose to sing the Orphic hymns accompanied by the lyre as a way of stimulating an awareness of ‘Platonic wisdom,’ which is to be found in contemplation of what we might now call, after Jung, ‘archetypal images.’ It seems that he may have recognised the same limitations for language that I have been noticing when it comes to penetrating that particular quality of knowing I describe as poetic wisdom.

In the discussion of the academy in Sphinx which I have previously referred to, this aspect of wisdom and the ‘way of knowing’ associated with it was traced back to Plotinus, certainly one of Ficino’s key sources. Plotinus noted:

“The wise men of Egypt when they wished to signify something wisely, did not use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds and the enunciations of philosophical statements, but by drawing images and inscribing in their temples one particular image of each thing, they manifested the non-discursiveness of the intelligible world, that is, that every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not discourse or deliberation.” (ibid: p. 87).

We so easily say, these days, that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” But that is not my point. An artwork, in whatever medium, offers us a route to a kind of knowing, a wisdom, which is of our integration with the world of nature and the divine. This is the function of beauty I am pursuing and my definition of aesthetic, which I return to in the third section of my thesis.

I wish, then, as the **fourth** criterion for the academy of my imagination, to be an aesthetic dimension.

This concludes my re-construction of the academy of my imagination. I have identified four criteria for this academy:-

- > Welcome as a friend
- > Emanating a spiritual quality
- > Integrating ideas across disciplines and inner with outer
- > Presenting an aesthetic congruence of form and substance.

Applying these Criteria to Validity and Method.

When I wrote the first draft of this piece, the Imaginative Academy, it was essentially to contrast with what I perceived as the characteristics of the present academic community. The not so unconscious defensive routine I was engaged in was something like:-

“Well, if you (the academy) aren’t going to like (validate) what I’m doing, then let me tell you that I don’t much like you either!”

This initial ‘venting’ led me to a consideration of the criteria by which I would like to be judged – so the ‘characteristics’ of my idealised academy were re-framed as potential criteria by which I (or this version of the academy) might judge the validity of how I was working as a researcher.

This re-framing, or turning, of characteristics into criteria led me to begin to question myself on what I thought I was doing and whether it held up to any kind of considered scrutiny. The question – The Nature of my Inquiry – and is it Research? – became interesting rather than simply challenging. I saw the possibility, in taking my own instinctive approach seriously, of constructing a more rigorous approach to what I now see as my reflective practice through writing.

The next step in my process, separately at first, was to pay attention to what I was actually engaged in as a faculty member and supervisor on AMOC. I was constructing and arguing for a set of criteria by which we could judge the validity of the work participants were doing in pursuing their dissertations. My route towards considerations of method continues to be through a questioning of the bases for validity.

PART 2 – THE PRACTICAL ACADEMY

1st draft September 1999

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3rd draft February 2001

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Introduction.

I suggested in the Dialectic Thou to this chapter that what I have called ‘The Practical Academy’ acts as a bridge between my aspirational learning community, my ‘Imaginative Academy,’ and the ‘real’ academy to which I am ‘applying.’

I originally named this section as a consequence of what I felt were two associated aspects to the evolution of my practice. One was my increasing preparedness to focus my research effort on to my practice as teacher. The other evolving aspect was my emerging responsibility for the dissertation element of the AMOC programme. So in a curious way the twin challenges to my research, my method and my practice, informed one another. The significance of the date of my first draft of this section is captured in this way:-

Over the last nine months or so, January to September 1999, I have been responsible for supervising the dissertation process for five participants on Ashridge Consulting’s MSc programme in Organisation Consulting (AMOC). This process culminated in an exam board on 14th September 1999.

As well as discussing (or defending, as I found myself doing) my assessments for the five participants I had supervised I was also representing my views on four further dissertations I had ‘double marked.’ And as the discussions deepened I realised I was holding a strong sense of ownership for ‘our’ (the faculty’s) assessment criteria and their interpretation.

I want to record a reflection on my learning since then, some two years and two further AMOC programmes on. I am aware of at least three inter-weaving strands of

development, all of them ‘practical,’ in the sense that I am using here for this bridging piece:-

> One learning is about the nature of the discourse at this and subsequent exam boards and my reactions to it. As I have indicated in my discussion about ‘growing up’ earlier in this thesis, I can easily feel criticism as personally directed and consequently disabling. So, at this first meeting in 1999 I defended, resolutely, my opinions about the assessment criteria we had drawn up and their application to individual dissertations. I had great difficulty in hearing the arguments and issues being discussed, especially by the external examiners (Guardians of the Academy), as other than attacks on my professional competence.

> A second aspect of learning is about the balance involved in shared leadership and responsibility amongst the faculty. I had been the faculty member responsible for summarising our agreements about the nature of the dissertation and the associated assessment criteria and for writing these up for the Participants’ Handbook. I had convened meetings of the dissertation supervisors to discuss our practice and for moderating our assessments. So I felt a keen sense of ownership and responsibility for the final assessments. But I was not alone.

> The third aspect of my learning, which is perhaps most directly relevant to this chapter, is about the validating of practical development within the framing of an academic qualification. I have gradually realised the significance of the issues facing us as a faculty in formulating criteria for the practice development of our participants within an academic framing at Masters level. As I have appreciated the significance of this issue I have been much more attentive and respectful of the discussions within faculty and at exam boards. And as I have applied this learning to my own inquiry I have gradually developed what feels like a more robust and grounded position.

As I have developed my own practice as teacher, particularly on this practitioner’s Masters programme, I have learned to appreciate the complexities of the validating issues, the role of critical discourse in the explication and application of these and a greater sense of balanced ownership with my faculty colleagues. I would characterise my participation in the equivalent exam board in September of 2001, where I was continuing my lead responsibility for the dissertation element of AMOC, as no less committed and engaged but substantially more inclined to listen! The inter-weaving of my practice and research has

been validated, in my own estimation, by this shift. This is the impact of reflective practice in practice. And in this case the reflexive process has been both through my writing and revising and in engaging in discussion within the faculty.

(As I now (May 2002) revise this piece once more, I am preparing, along with my colleagues, for a re-validation of the AMOC programme. I have been heavily engaged in re-considering and re-writing the criteria we intend to adopt for the assessment process throughout the programme including the dissertation phase. This process has led to my suggesting a further shift in our assessment process to focus on practical application and a distinct move away from my research emphasis in the dissertation towards a developmental emphasis. I can report for myself a distinct sense of satisfaction that I have not been caught up in a defensive posture towards what seem to be inappropriately bureaucratic aspects of the process, but have managed to dig into the substance of the debate with a considerable degree of genuine fascination. I am hearing differently.

I am also noticing a 'distancing' effect as I relinquish direct responsibility for the dissertation process for the fourth AMOC programme and take up, instead, a role supervising the supervisors. I am finding the loss of direct contact with 'my' supervision students considerably hard. I have learned to appreciate the power of some form of reflective practice in my own development and have witnessed (and contributed in some measure towards) its power with my students.

This may be an appropriate moment to declare my intent which is to set out as clearly as I can my own appreciation for valid first person action inquiry, for I feel it has worked for me in my development and I have seen how it can work for others. This is a declaration of intent on my own account for my thesis but it is also an intent to continue to argue for the validity of this kind of inquiry, first person focused, within the AMOC context.

In a way, then, this chapter, through my practical learning as teacher, shifts from a narrow purpose in defending my application to 'the academy' to a wider purpose in advocating action inquiry as a viable form of personal development, valid within the context of 'academic' study).

Reading What I Write.

There is a deliciously ironic quality in the way that I have learned from taking seriously, as a researcher, what I have written for other researchers, in this case participants on AMOC. My intention is to re-produce key sections of the Module Handbook I wrote for the Dissertation Module of AMOC as it had evolved up to September 2001 (i.e. prior to the latest re-considerations in view of the re-validation process). Much of my drafting of the handbook has been conducted out of my 'practice persona' without any serious recognition of the implications for my own research process! I start with a statement of purpose which has become increasingly developmental in its orientation:-

"The purpose of the dissertation is to provide you with a disciplined process for developing your practice.

As a consequence of this disciplined process of inquiry and development we hope that you will be both more aware and more confident in your inter-actions with organisation.

This process may well lead you to question and examine some of your underlying assumptions and beliefs about both yourself and your role and in the way you view organisations. Indeed the programme so far may well have led to some fundamental questioning of this sort. You may be intending to use the dissertation process as a way of further developing new possibilities for your practice. We will not be looking for, nor judging, completion or resolution of a process, but we will be concerned to support you in a robust way to approach this particular task systematically and rigorously."

(AMOC 4 Module 4 Handbook – Introduction)

(I turn the page in my earlier draft, aware in advance of the marginal note made by my own supervisor, Professor Judi Marshall. Note the inclusion, at this moment, of Judi's title. "**hoho!**" she writes, "**all this a little ironic.**"

Which is, of course, if I can maintain my 'grown up' state, not only true but in a way the learning process point that I am making. The bridge I have built through my own practice as teacher has enabled me to inquire into my own methodology with a more distanced, ironic, maybe, view than when I felt that I was pursuing a poorly researched defence of a dimly perceived issue. I feel that I perceive the issue more clearly as a consequence of having to teach and subsequently assess (and, indeed, subsequently defend

or at least explain my assessments) AMOC dissertations. One way of naming the issue, which informed our most recent discussion as a faculty group when we considered a radical revision to the assessment process, is the academic validation of personal, practical development. Or, to continue to use the extended epistemology of Reason and Heron described in Chapter 1, how to validate practical knowing.

But what I am increasingly noticing is the way that this 'bridge' has two distinct ends. In the middle, as it were, I see the clear relation between the work that I have been doing supervising and assessing the Masters in Organisation Consulting and my researching for a PhD in the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice. The one informs the other. The question I pose as teacher – what criteria do we set for the validation of praxis development – is similar to the question which guides this chapter – What is the Nature of my Inquiry – and is it Research?

But there is a difference, too. Increasingly I favour a definition of the AMOC process as praxis development, including the dissertation aspect, and then the question for the validity of our criteria is one of Masters level achievement. But I am pursuing, according to my own chosen focus, a research process which is inquiring into learning, an inquiry which is a personal life inquiry related, indeed, to my practice, but not in pursuit, particularly, of developing it. Or, rather, it is in pursuit of developing me, and through me, it! And it is also aimed at a PhD level. So, there is a different territory, at least in terms of emphasis, at either end of the bridge.

But let me just pursue the middle ground some more. To what was Judi referring in this marginal note? My best attempt at setting out, for others, criteria by which we might judge systematic rigour in inquiry).

'My' Dissertation Handbook continues:-

"The Structure of the Dissertation:

We will be looking for three specific elements to be included in your dissertation process and the final written document.

A Cycle of Inquiry – Self with Organisation.

The dissertation is an opportunity for you to engage in a deliberate and systematic process of inquiry into you, your organisation(s) and the interaction between you and organisation. We anticipate that you will be informed by some theme, question or issue that may have been emerging through the earlier modules to which you

now want to devote serious attention. We hope that you will use the time wisely to undertake an appreciable cycle of inquiry and track it systematically.

Theory and Action

Your dissertation is undertaken within the framework of an MSc degree. We believe that this provides for an appropriate level of discipline and expectation for your critical appreciation of theory and how it applies in practice.

We have been stressing through the assignment process so far the value of theory as a guidance for action and the value of theory emerging from experience. We subscribe to the notion of a cycle of learning in which theory is both gained and tested. So, a good theoretical basis and understanding are critical, we believe, to the successful process of development through your dissertation.

Method.

The third area of focus is your method, the way in which you approach and conduct your inquiry. This will be the subject of some of the work of module 3, to introduce you to the field of action research or inquiry. This is a part of our frame for the programme and we hope that you will find it stimulating and liberating as a way of approaching your own practice development. (ibid)

(Perhaps Judi's comment was more precisely focused on the aspiration that method should be stimulating and liberating. Maybe, indeed, I was using the vehicle of my advocacy of methodological rigour to my students as a projection of my own, gradual and grudging, appreciation for the place of methodological considerations not just in the process of academic validation but also in the value of the learning process).

I notice the final paragraph in 'my' Handbook. It also has resonance for the approach I have been learning to take with regard to my methodology:-

"Ultimately this process is offered for your own practice development. You should use these notes and the support of your peers and supervisor to ensure that you get the best value you can from the disciplined use of your time. Even the assessment criteria are offered in this spirit, as a source of guidance and challenge for you to achieve an outcome that might excite or startle you!" (ibid)

As I progress across the bridge towards my own inquiry into method, I do so increasingly with a sense of creative interest rather than with a foreboding about some 'correct' answer I should have found.

I have tried to capture part of my learning from the “Practical Academy” of AMOC through these extracts from our latest module handbook. But as I indicated at the start of this section I was first alerted to the issues and dynamics involved in trying to establish a set of criteria for judging practical development through Action Inquiry, broadly scoped, within the expectations of an academic degree, at our first exam board. I would like to conclude this bridging piece with some further reflections following our 2001 experience of assessing, moderating and reviewing dissertations. I have been trying to notice and define, in some way, the characteristics that differentiate dissertations from our many hours of discourse.

Of course I have been listening with ears especially attuned by my own experience of having my work reviewed and challenged through my supervision group at Bath and by my inquiry into method.

(I notice another reference to hearing differently, a consistent theme of the phase of learning I have named as Growing Up. I am interested in the possibility that ‘hearing differently’ affects a more emotional quality of learning than my more normal ‘seeing differently’, which may be more cognitive. This is another feature of the learning process I am increasingly attending to in my reflective practice).

Emerging Criteria in the Practical Academy.

I have noticed three streams of conversation continuing through our various meetings, both internally within the AMOC faculty and with our two external examiners.

1. Congruence

This term has figured frequently. I have a sense of it acting as a multi-faceted reference to a quality of intellectual rigour which it has been hard for us to name directly.

There are three aspects to congruence which I have noted as especially telling in the quality of accounts:-

- Congruence of methodology with epistemology and ontology.
- Congruence of form with content
- Congruence between aspiration and practice.

The third of these aspects has been particularly problematic and the cause of considerable experimentation with assessment processes. As developmental practitioners supervising and assessing the written work of practitioners, we have had a very hard time separating out accounts of practice development from our knowledge of the participant through experience on the programme including in depth support in Consulting Application Groups. In a way this is a 'simple' issue of subjective judgement, and much of our effort in creating sophisticated criteria based double marking schemes has intended to address this.

My particular interest, however, in the broader context of personally based action inquiry, is what I perceive as an inevitable tendency to search for congruence between what is written on the page and what is practised. As I have been challenged on many occasions within my supervision group at Bath to include second person references to support or validate claims about my practice development I have been naturally interested in this particular route towards congruence.

But I believe that this is where the praxis development focus of the AMOC programme and my chosen life inquiry focus diverge to either side of the bridge. I am attending to the development of my practice as an aspect of life choice - how I lead my life - rather than to the effect that I have on others. I am interested in the way that I have learned to choose and approach my practice within a broader set of life choices, which is why my emphasis, in methodological terms, is so heavily 'first person' oriented.

(Indeed this is often an issue for AMOC participants, too - they are moved to inquire into the wider context of their practice and the choices they are making rather than a narrower definition of 'professional practice' as organisation consultants).

The other two aspects of congruence are easier to discern within dissertation accounts and have played a considerable part, it seems to me, in 'settling' the reader into a sense of security with the work and, on occasions, exciting the reader into an engagement with the account.

2. Critical Distance

This is a term I have coined to try to indicate a criterion which has been fundamental in our deliberations as an AMOC supervision group. An early discussion in reviewing assignments with the external examiners alerted us to the dangers of solipsism.

which we discovered was a disease associated with first person accounts to be eradicated at all costs!

I remember well my own, early anxieties about this condition which I expressed in my Diploma transfer paper this way:

“Validity: I think I want to distinguish my intentions for this work as “research” from pure self indulgence, on the one hand, and my “normal” practice as consultant and manager on the other. The question, then, is what is distinctive about this aspect of my work that justifies calling it research?”

(RGL Diploma Transfer Paper, Jan 1997)

The question continues to exercise me! I will return to how I think I have exercised this particular quality of critical distance in my own work in the next section. For now let me try and describe it as it has become apparent in our assessment and supervising work.

One of the distinctions we now notice more thoroughly is that between description, in an account, and reflexivity. This is partly a matter of form – an aspect of the accounting process which distinguishes between initial descriptions of an event or process, for example, and a subsequent, or parallel, reflection which seeks to adduce developmental meaning. And it is also in the content of the account as a very present underlying dynamic.

My emerging view is that the writer’s intent gets conveyed in the writing. This has become a matter of considerable concern as we have tried to distinguish between participants who are skilled, indeed in some cases gifted, writers, and others who may have more difficulty in expressing themselves. For our interest, presumably, is not in the writing of the account but in what the account is trying to convey. And critical distance, as a developmental intent, does seem to seep out of, or not as the case might be, the writing whatever the form.

The other way I think we are increasingly noticing this quality is in the way in which theoretical and methodological streams inform the practical inquiry. In a way this refers back to the first aspect of congruence I mentioned above. But I think there is a separate quality which we tend to discuss under a kind of banner term, now, which is ‘hermeneutic.’ It is as though ‘hermeneutic’ is the antidote to ‘solipsism.’

I suppose a test I am beginning to discern for the quality of ‘critical distance’ is a test of choice. Do I see, at some point in the account, that the inquirer is sufficiently

distanced from her/himself, seeing with a critical eye, that he/she can choose how to respond.

(I am interested in my own work about this quality of critical distance being exercised through the revision process. It is not just the crafting associated with revision but the effort to craft for another – my reader. As my reader becomes more prominent in successive revisions, as my expression becomes more outwardly focused, I believe I take on a more distanced perspective which is critically interested in ‘so what choice is this learning leading you to’?)

In applying this test I have encountered another aspect of our assessment dilemma which is about distance travelled as compared to critically distanced. Do we judge development or inquiry?

Which leads me to the third and probably most problematic of the criteria we have struggled to define, which I name as integrity.

3. Integrity

One of the difficulties I have with this notion is as to whether it is actually a separate quality or the consequence, in an account, of the first two.

I remember Judi Marshall describing to me at one point her experience of reading PhD theses as an external examiner. At some point in the account she would decide, make a judgement, as to whether to ‘trust’ the account, which presumably implies trusting the writer.

I notice in my own reading a tendency to distinguish a quality of balance between the ‘personal’ and the ‘context.’ I think what I am appreciating in this regard is a ‘truthful’ account from a personal perspective but one which pays sufficient attention to the wider context as to convey a sense of inter-connection.

(I am less sure about this description of the quality I am trying to identify on further reflection. I worry that I am twisting my experience as an AMOC supervisor too much towards a ‘justification’ of my research method. I am more inclined to see ‘integrity’ in the process, I think, than the content. It is difficult to distinguish from the combination of congruence and critical distance. But the distinction is there. Perhaps it is about rigour –

the rigour with which the appropriate process is being applied to the particular aspect of praxis development under scrutiny).

Another problematic term much encountered within the AMOC community is authenticity. It seems to me that there is a correspondence between authenticity and integrity which is bound up in the quality of balance between self and context. This may be expressed through an appropriate humility of account or a lightness of touch. Integrity, in this sense, is not heavy and serious but rather appreciative of the multiplicity of possible truths.

Summary.

I have been trying to describe in this bridging section my 'practical' learning as a responsible member of the AMOC faculty for the dissertation process included in that programme. I am making a connection between the qualities we have been trying to identify and define as distinguishing characteristics which we apply in the supervision and assessment processes and my own inquiry into methodological validity in the context of this PhD thesis.

I have set out two separate sets of three criteria. The first three, which are explicitly set out in the written handbook under the heading "Structure of the Dissertation," are an expression of the required elements: **a cycle of inquiry; theory and action; and method.**

In a way these identify necessary features of the dissertation account – that each should be sufficiently included.

The second set is my attempt to distinguish a number of threads which emerge from conversations attempting to distinguish the quality of accounts one from another, which is a way of trying to get into, or behind, the stated, almost quantitative criteria to their qualitative aspect. I discern another form of dialectic at work, here, which is between an explicit set of criteria as stated and an underlying appreciation for qualities which are hard to describe, perhaps, but nevertheless apparent. I have named these as: **congruence; critical distance; and integrity.**

I am preparing to leave the bridge of the Practical Academy on the side associated with my own research having joined it on the side associated with my practice as AMOC faculty member. I carry with me my reflections on our learning about the appropriate

criteria by which to assess praxis development in that context of a Masters qualification. I notice their appropriateness at least as a starting point for my own research process but also recognise differences in emphasis and level. I am ready to enter into a discussion at that side door of the academy I have identified as my potential entry point.

PART 3 –THE VALIDATING ACADEMY

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Introduction.

I am conscious of asking you to continue to engage with a number of streams of inquiry. There are two that I want to draw attention to by way of introduction to this third part of my chapter on The Nature of my Inquiry – and is it Research?

The main focus of my inquiry at this stage of my thesis is into the validity of my emergent methodology. I realise that I may be confusing these two aspects, an essentially epistemological inquiry with a reflection on my research process. I will return to this potential confusion later in this part of my account to try and clarify my understandings of these two elements along with the ontological frame in which they sit.

I am also trying to maintain a representation of my process of learning as a kind of continuing background or field of my inquiry. In this chapter I have tried to present my emotional maturing as a researcher more ready to engage in an informed discussion of how my instinctive approach to my research may resonate with the wider academic concern for methods of reflective practice and the impact of different forms of presentation on the multiplicity of knowings we increasingly appreciate.

(I just love how that little ‘we’ has slipped into my account. I am increasingly imagining conducting this discussion inside my selected entry door. Indeed, during these later revisions I have exercised the computer’s delete function on a number of references to application and joining and entry. Of course my work is to be judged as of sufficient quality to justify the award of a degree and I certainly maintain a significant anxiety about academic judgements of my ‘worth’. But as my inquiry continues I am becoming

increasingly clear that my 'instinctive' concerns for the validation of knowing are both widely shared and subject to much debate, especially in an educational field concerned for the validation of praxis development and the emancipation of experience as a legitimate source of knowing).

This continuing concern for representational form is embedded within my interest in my learning. I am interested in what I am learning and how I am learning. No doubt this is why I have been so interested as a practitioner in the criterion I extracted from the AMOC experience as **congruence of form with substance**. This accords closely, in my view, with the Imaginative Academy characteristic of **aesthetic congruence**. In an early draft of this section I referred to a passage from Denzin on Ethnopoetics (to which I will return later in the text) this way:

I offer this passage as a reflection of my wish that you should experience, as reader, a kind of recognition in what I have to say because of, in a way, the way that I say it. I am seeking a form here which is 'artistic' in that it invites you to witness through a combination of the senses. I am asking you, I suppose, to read my work imaginatively rather than literally, believing that you will find a truth in the form.

This is true of my thesis as a whole, as I requested in my Preface. But it continues to be true as I try to 'explain' my emergent sense of methodology. For although I do think I 'understand' it, and can and should therefore represent it clearly, I also 'sense' or 'feel' it, and I want to convey this quality, too.

In the way of good stories, there was a particular moment, in May 2000, when I returned from a supervision group at Bath having asked Judi Marshall as directly as I could – “so, how much reading into methodology do you expect of a practitioner PhD?” Her answer as I carry it in my head (which is the important truth here of recollection rather than the recorded truth I could test from the tape of the session) went something like – “I suggest you approach your methodology in the spirit of inquiry.” I accepted an implication which was that the quality of the search was more important than the quantity of reading or reference. So, I chose to go back to the beginning, in a way, which was the article Donna gave me to read before I applied to the University of Bath, which has already been referred to in the Imaginative Academy section, Peter Reason's essay “Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science” (1993). The paragraph I had copied out into my journal at the time is sufficiently significant for me to re-produce as a kind of 'text,' in the way that preachers often start their sermons from a piece of text:

“Human inquiry is one path toward creative experience of our world, which includes experience of the sacred whole, representation of that experience in ways that bring beauty, understanding and framing of that experience in ways that are not alienated, and action and engagement to heal ourselves and our planet. Thus experience, representation, understanding, and action are four aspects of sacred inquiry.” (Reason 1993: p. 277)

I believe I started out imagining that I was engaged in ‘Sacred Inquiry’ as set out here. And maybe I have been but I reckon to have modified my view as I have inquired. So I would like to embark on a circular journey, out from this text into my experience and my reading, to return to it at the end and re-examine it in the light of my present vantage point.

I wish to present my research method, through this record of my inquiry, in three ways:-

- as a developing, emerging process, congruent with my learning
- as appropriate to a first person “living inquiry.”
- as an example of the place of writing in research practice.

I start with a review of the emergent quality of my engagement with methodology.

An emergent appreciation for methodology.

In my first, hesitant draft of this piece, I wrote of the relation between my method and purpose in this way:

I have essentially been using the discipline of writing a thesis, with the support of my colleagues in CARPP, to help me develop, learn to ‘grow up’ as I now name it, to create my third age identity, and to pursue the scholarship I feel I lacked previously in my life, to make sense of the world in which I have to make my way. So, my learning has been interior, making revised sense of myself, an emotional maturing. It has been exterior to the extent that I have been continuously, and despite my many protestations to the contrary, as recorded in my supervision group discussions, developing my practice as a consultant, developer and, subsequently, teacher. I have also been developing my practice as writer even if, in my terms, I have not been “really” writing. As I look back on my early drafts I believe that I have gradually improved my ability to communicate clearly, without sacrificing

what I see as some essential quality of sense making which is 'enlivening the senses.' And I have been doing my scholarship, reading and studying in the fields of philosophy, science and aesthetics, especially, as well as continuing my interests in ecology, psychology and spirituality.

So, I have been reading and writing and talking and listening.

But is this research? And does it lead to a 'thesis' in the terms of a PhD?

This formulation of the question relates to an aspect of my purpose, my bid to enter 'the academy'. But more fundamentally I am interested in learning about knowing. And I 'know', at some instinctive level, that it is really important to do research of this kind, to inquire deeply into the nature of knowing at a personal level. I want to make sense for myself of the choices I make about what and how I know, for these choices play out in my life decisions. So, in response to my question -but is this research? – I noted:

On Validity

Well, I think it probably depends on the qualities of the reading and writing and talking and listening and whether they are set in some kind of systematic and rigorous process of Inquiry. And whether they have led to anything interesting by way of development, a contribution to the academy of 'knowledge.'

I was encouraged by a statement, somewhat truncated, about "Truth as Will," from another article which appeared early on in my reading, like Reason's essay on Sacred Science, and which made more sense from a retrospective vantage point:

"We have argued for a shift in ideology which places us as creators of our world rather than as actors in someone else's; we have borrowed from Hegel to point to the possibility of a synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity at a Realized level of being. From existentialism we have seen that knowledge is based in our own choices as knowers; the ideas derived from ecological thinking ask us to look for the pattern which connects, and to think in terms of information and difference; dialectics suggest that we pay particular attention to the way things change through contradiction; and hermeneutics offers a circular path towards understanding. The pattern which connects these ideas is that we should not seek knowledge as a thing

we can have, but rather be involved in a personal, circular, contradictory process of knowing, of inquiry." (Rowan and Reason 1981: p. 136)

(I want to pause a moment to reflect with you on my learning about learning at this point. It relates to two essential elements of my method, reading and writing. As I have noted a couple of times now, I have a habit of returning to particular readings, often years later, as with the quotation above. I find a passage copied into my journals which obviously excited me at the time. Then I have to go and find the reference to search for its context. I sense that this first, excited, reading involved some kind of pre-recognition. I 'knew' what the writer was writing about without necessarily being able to understand what they had said.

Then I write. I write from my own experience, trying to express what I 'know' through my senses. And then with this experiential grounding I can return to the original quotation with a renewed sense of knowing which is more explicitly 'propositional.' In a hermeneutic sense, it seems that I have to excite a certain level of pre-knowing and then cycle through an experiential and expressive loop, in order to engage with the theory at a propositional level in explanatory mode.

The experience I am describing as the cycle or loop of learning, working from an expression of experiential knowing to the presentation of propositional knowing, seems similar to the linear form of Reason and Heron's extended epistemology, indeed its hierarchic form. But what I am noticing is that that explicit cycle is pre-figured by an earlier inspirational appreciation which is, I think, the quality of knowing I am trying to describe as 'poetic wisdom.' And somewhere in my resistance to this whole issue of validity and methodology, which I have somewhat glibly dismissed as 'adolescent,' is a fear for the sanctity of much of that wisdom – or for the sanctity of appreciating it in its pre-figured, poetic form rather than 'elevated' to theoretical propositions.

So, I am reflecting at two levels:-

- One is the 'learning cycle,' in which I am relating the hierarchic form of Reason and Heron's extended epistemology to my 'bumpy wheel,' noticing also the dialectic interplay between the expressive and the explanatory.
- The other is to notice, rather more respectfully, my resistance to necessarily make the dialectic leap from expression to explanation and 'upward,' by implication, into propositional or theoretical territory. There is a value, I am

suggesting, in the root grounded knowing of poetic wisdom maintained in an expressive form.

In trying to present my methodological inquiry in a form in which these streams of reflection are maintained, I hope to represent that dialectic element of my research).

In a way it seems to me now, in my retrospective revision, that Reason and Rowan are saying something like this in describing 'knowing' from a participatory perspective in their essay "On Making Sense," quoted from above. Knowing, they suggest, is not a thing we can have but rather a process of inquiry, personal, circular and contradictory.

I reckon that what I have described as my instinctive or emergent research methodology accords with this description. And I think that the inquiring process alluded to is a form of Reflective Practice.

I intend to proceed with a discussion of the Reflective Practice Paradigm as I shall call it (after Winter et al 1999: p. 182).

The Validity of Reflective Practice.

I intend to discuss briefly the validity of reflective practice in a general sense but then return to my chosen or instinctive process to consider its form and substance. This, as it happens, is a reversal of the inquiry process which led me to the current 'sense' I make of the way my methodology fits within this broad 'paradigm' of learning and research. I make this point to emphasise the way the reflexive process of revision, as I experience it, sometimes takes 'bumpy turns', somehow opening up a new perspective almost by 're-versing' into it.

I choose the term 'paradigm' to convey the general scope of Reflective Practice as a term in the way Richard Winter and his colleagues describe its significance, "*It (the use of the term paradigm) suggests that we are concerned with a set of methods which imply not only a conception of technique but also an overarching 'philosophy' and a set of social and political values.*" (Winter et al 1999: pp. 181-2).

Each of these aspects is significant to my instinctive grasp for a way of inquiring into my own experience of learning. The aspect with which I want to start is the philosophical.

(My comment about the order in which my inquiry led me into this discussion of the validity of the reflective practice paradigm as compared to the order in which I now

choose to present it is rather more complex than a simple reversing. I cannot easily separate out my own appreciation for the philosophical, social and political aspects of the broader paradigm from its validation of a 'set of methods', including my own. I got the method first but I got it, in a way, because of these overarching aspects.

So, how do I present all this to you in a way which will be accessible, which means sequencing it, and yet maintains some congruence with my process? This is, of course, the ever-present revisionary question.

I have written a Philosophical Reflection which is intended to summarise the fruits of my 'scholarship' – or What I Know – in this field. But What I Know is inextricably linked with How I Know. My choice, in this final revision, is to present this Philosophical Reflection in the next section. But I must make a crucial, ontological point here, to justify or validate my own attraction to the Reflective Practice paradigm).

> The Philosophical Aspect of the Reflective Practitioner Paradigm.

I offered you Van Morrison's reflections on the philosophical turn which liberated me on the path between Despair and Hope in the transitional Interlude into Section 1. You can choose, he sang in Enlightenment, how you think. Knowledge and the way we acquire it, I realised, is constructed by ourselves. This is the Copernican revolution in philosophy introduced to me initially by Richard Tarnas, acknowledged in Section 1 as one of my significant teachers. Mary Warnock expresses the revolution succinctly:

"The Kantian Copernican revolution, according to which we must regulate the world by our own concepts before we can learn the regularities of the world, and according to which we could not even perceive the world of objects unless we constituted it first by our own schematism of the imagination. " (Warnock 1976: p. 126)

Warnock's inclusion of the imagination is crucial to my argument, which I will again return to in more depth in Section 3 in the chapter The Imagination. But for now the crucial element of her statement for me is that we must 'regulate the world by our own concepts **before** we learn the regularities of the world'. This is to argue for, in my belief, first person inquiry as a crucial base for learning. I want to include a longer passage I discovered in the writings of Mary Midgeley. The length is necessary to convey the tone. And I believe that the tone, the perspective, is crucially informing in our appreciation for

constructed knowing. Our construction is thoroughly influenced by our perspective or intention. The passage reflects my particular interest in the study of consciousness.

“The Return of the First Person

We need other ways of thinking. We have to stop thinking of consciousness as a peculiar, isolated feature of certain objects – as just one particular state or function of certain organisms – and start to think of it rather as a whole point of view, equal in size and importance to the objective point of view as a whole. And we shall not get far with this if we start our investigation by worrying about whether we can recognise consciousness in other people – about the so-called ‘problem of other minds’.

To suppose that we have a problem about the existence of other minds is to be in trouble already because it is to have started in the wrong place – Descartes’ wrong place. If we once sit down in that place, we shall never get rid of the problem. (Bertrand Russell, who was wedded to this starting-point, never did get rid of it.) This approach conceives of minds – or consciousnesses – unrealistically as self-contained, isolated both from each other and from the world around them. It is terminally solipsistic.

(Hoo-ray – don’t you just love this! I have so enjoyed reading this passage out loud to folk, most recently at the Schumacher group I mentioned in the previous Section. It is writing straight out of the mouth, wonderful).

To avoid this unreal isolation, we had better attend in the first place to the examples that are most familiar to us, namely, our own experience and its relation with that of others familiar to us. Consciousness is not something rare and exotic found only in experimental subjects or in scientific observers. Nor does it only show us a few special phenomena such as colours and dreams and hallucinations. It is not primarily an observation-station. It is the crowded scene of our daily lives. And the main dramas going on in it do not concern just observation or perception but quite complex, dynamic currents of feeling and efforts to act. If we mean to do justice to this complexity, we have to take seriously the rich, well-organised language we use about it everyday. That language does not just express an amateur ‘folk-psychology’. It is the indispensable working skeleton of all our thought – including, of course, our thought about science.” (Midgeley 2001: pp 85-86)

Here is a justification, a term I recognise that I am beginning to substitute for validation, for a first-person focus, one of the two critical issues I identified in the Dialectic Thou to this chapter. But the tone I so enjoy in Midgeley's account expresses something of the political dimension of my attachment to this Reflective Paradigm.

I have identified my own sense of liberation as a consequence of the post-modern view of knowledge as socially, or contextually, constructed. The liberation involves a responsibility. Not only can I choose how I think, but I must. And just as I have begun to substitute the notion of justification for validity I recognise that my attraction to the tone of Midgeley's argument is for folk-wisdom rather than an exclusive 'academic' judgement.

> The Political Aspect of the Reflective Practice Paradigm.

At a personal level, the political message of the constructionist underpinnings of the Reflective Practice paradigm is that my role as a creative maker of meanings is set against a structure of institutional learning which pre-supposes that knowledge, and its validation, are already 'out there' in some objectified form. My prior 'construction' of the academy, clearly, has taken some shifting from a point of 'adolescent' or 'subservient' supplication to a Validating Institution towards an adult engagement, recognising the contextual basis for conversation.

One of my attractions to Mary Midgeley's account was the title of that particular book in her canon, "Science and Poetry". I have been engaged in (I continue to be engaged) a process of scholarship intended, at some level, to re-privilege poetry (or, maybe, the Romantic tradition, or maybe, the neo-platonic tradition) versus science. As my view of this dichotomy has matured, I have begun to insert the **and** in my own thinking, substituting it for the **versus**.

In the same way that I will argue for the emancipation of Art as object into art as verb in Section 4, I am intrigued by the notion that I am engaged in the emancipation of science through the application of reflective practice.

I am indebted to Winter et al, once again, for their introduction to Dewey's contribution to this emancipatory argument. In the same way that Midgeley argues for the significance of everyday language, Winter suggests that Dewey emphasised that *"'scientific method' is embodied in the problem-solving and interpretation of experience carried out by ordinary citizens in the course of their everyday lives. In other words, he*

presents 'experience as experimentation'. 'Thinking' is precipitated by an experience which makes us aware of a 'problem' – of ambiguities, dilemmas and alternatives – and thereby forces us through 'perplexity' into 'reflection'". (Winter et al 1999: p.188)

My political appreciation for the paradigm within which Reflective Practice broadly sits is what seems to me to be a necessary re-balancing of ways of knowing other than the 'scientific' which dominates our culture. Our 'salvation', as I have described my aspiration for humankind in *A Dialectic Thou* (p 28) depends on liberating our thought processes, and consequently our choices, from the deterministic rational presumptions of scientific thinking as it is applied across so many aspects of our lives.

The particular dimension of this liberation which Richard Winter and his colleagues point to is 'emancipatory learning'. They refer to Habermas's stress on the *"importance of the distinction between the different 'cognitive interests' served by the pursuit of different forms of knowledge. Thus he distinguishes between the 'practical' interest of simply 'understanding' the variety of our fellow human beings' interpretations of experience and the 'emancipatory interest which aims at the pursuit of reflection' in the search for 'autonomy and responsibility'. For this we need to engage 'critically' with those aspects of our understanding which preserve our dependency on power relations, ideologies and neuroses. 'Reflection' thus requires forms of communication which embody the democratic ideals shared by philosophy, politics and education, namely that they must be freed from the distorting effects of power relations."* (Winter et al 1999: p. 189)

I am arguing in my thesis for a parallel appreciation for life in its broadest context - a cosmic appreciation - which we learn to express through art, equally emancipated as the right and responsibility of us all. This argument is more fully developed in Section 3, but in the context of this discussion of the Reflective Paradigm has a clear implication for my chosen form of reflective practice.

➤ **The Social and Historical Aspect of the Reflective Practice Paradigm.**

I am rather less interested in the narrow social and historical context of 'professional practice' which may have initiated the Reflective Practitioner through the work of Donald Schon and Boud et al (Schon 1983, Boud et al 1985) than its broader context within postmodern thought. My Philosophical Reflection in Section 3 returns to this point as I clearly have difficulty in separating the social and historical context from the philosophical.

Indeed, as I understand it, this is the major discovery of postmodernism which is that our thinking, our view of knowledge, is fundamentally determined by the context in which that thinking takes place.

Of course, as a postmodernist 'deconstruction' would immediately identify, the notion of 'discovery itself is redolent of implausible notions of objectivity. In what I notice as my less charitable view of the 'extreme' postmodern position, any search for 'knowing' in the sense of 'comprehensive patterns' must simply be abandoned as a relic of the antiquated quest for the eternal, the real, the essential, and the absolute. There are no master narratives about 'identity', about 'tradition', about 'culture', or about anything else. There are just events, persons, and passing formulas, and those inconsonant. We must, it is suggested, content ourselves with diverging tales in irreconcilable idioms, and not attempt to enfold them into synoptic visions. Such visions (this vision has it) are not to be had. Trying to achieve them leads only to illusion - to stereotype, prejudice, resentment, and conflict.

Although I appreciate, the liberation that postmodernism offers, I am in pursuit of a generative, connected interpretation. *"What we need, it seems, are not enormous ideas, nor the abandonment of synthesizing notions altogether. What we need are ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities, responsive to - - - 'deep diversity', a plurality of ways of belonging and being, and that yet can draw from them - from it - a sense of connectedness, a connectedness that is neither comprehensive nor uniform, primal nor changeless, but nonetheless real."* (Geertz 2000: p. 224)

My personal hope for the present historical context in which postmodernism opens up multiple ways of knowing set in different social contexts, is that we may re-discover knowings which are instinctual and connected, cosmically connected. My hope is that the 'perennial philosophy' has a chance to re-assert itself albeit in a modified, diversified and particularised way.

In pursuing the elusive quality of validity I feel that I have learned to locate my research process within the broad methodological paradigm of Reflective Practice, which is itself validated within postmodern constructionism. But I have noticed my gradual insertion of the notion of justification as a substitute or alternative to validation. Having located a framing 'paradigm' I want to progress my inquiry in two further ways. One is into the particular '**form**' of my chosen reflective practice and the second is, by way of justification, into its '**substance**'.

Forms of Understanding - Choosing my Way of Knowing.

The title I select for this progression of my 'justification' for my method refers to Elliot Eisner's presidential address at the AERA Annual Meeting in April 1993 under the title "Forms of Understanding and the Future of Educational Research."

The central argument I identify from this *"partly the story of a personal odyssey and partly a confessional"*, is Eisner's *"belief in the constructive character of mind, the critically important role of the senses in its formation, and the contribution of the imagination in defining the limits mind can reach"*, which is consistent with his experience as a painter. In the same way that I quoted at length Mary Midgeley's justification for inquiring into self, a central concern of this chapter, so do I want to include Elliot Eisner's basis for this belief which accords with my search for the appropriate presentational form for my reflective practice.

"First among these (varieties of beliefs) is the belief that experience is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed and that experience in significant degree depends on our ability to get in touch with the qualitative world we inhabit. This qualitative world is immediate before it is mediated, presentational before it is representational, sensuous before it is symbolic. This "getting in touch," which is crucial for any artist, I did not regard then nor do I today as a noncognitive, affective event that simply supplies the mind with something to think about. Getting in touch is itself an act of discrimination, a fine-grained, sensitively nuanced selective process in which the mind is fully engaged. I believed then (as a practising painter), as I believe now, that the eye is part of the mind. Consciousness of the qualitative world as a source of potential experience and the human sensory system as a means through which those potentialities are explored require no sharp distinction between cognition and perception: On the contrary, I came to believe that perception is a cognitive event and that construal, not discovery, is critical. Put another way, I came to believe that humans do not simply have experience; they have a hand in its creation, and the quality of their creation depends upon the ways they employ their minds. A second idea that has guided my journey is the belief that the use of mind is the most potent means of its development. What we think about matters. What we try

to do with what we think matters. Education is a mind-making process."

(Eisner 1993: p. 5)

I respond and resonate with Eisner's beliefs in a number of ways. I notice myself gasping at the implication of my chosen practice in his formulation of education as engaged in 'mind-making'. Admittedly his concern is primarily for the education of children rather than adult practitioners, but I recognise myself as engaged, often, in a process which might be mind-unmaking - un-learning - with my clients and participants. I bring to this work, as a consequence of my research, two clear imperatives:-

- The first is to be continuously engaged in an active and robust process of 'getting in touch' - this is the basis or justification of my reflective practice.
- The second is to strive for a scrupulous attention on 'mind-making' as the sole responsibility of the other in any (educational) relationship.

(I was recently (in May 2002) preparing to lead the presentation of a proposal we, in Ashridge Consulting Limited, had prepared for the IFC, an agency within the World Bank. The tender request was for consulting support to their adoption and espousal of Corporate Social Responsibility as a fundamental aspect of their strategy and culture. We, the three consultants selected to make the presentation in Washington, had decided to include as part of the personal introductions responses to the question "What draws you here"? I had had the chance to cogitate on the question and was visited, in a dream the night before the presentation, by a clear recollection of my parents discussing the medical education work my father was engaged in Northern Uganda. The substance of the conversation was about the potentially transformative quality of education. "But", my father said, "you have to find a way of educating from within." At the time I applied this thinking to the IFC project (which, incidentally we have failed to win!) but since then I have been pondering on this as another crucial 'attentional phrase', a guiding 'touch stone' for my work not just as teacher but as a whole .)

The second crucial resonance for me in Eisner's statement is that 'the qualitative world is immediate before it is mediated, presentational before it is representational'. This is my experience. So I am in search for a way of mind-making, my task, through a re-presentational process which honours my experience. This criterion defines the basis upon which I have been 'crafting' my account, the criterion of **congruence**.

My concern for craft resonates with the third of Eisner's beliefs, which has to do with re-presentation. *"As sensibility is refined, our ability to construct meaning within a domain increases. The refinement of sensibility is no small accomplishment. Hearing is an achievement, not simply a task. To hear the music, to see the landscape, to feel the qualities of a bolt of cloth, are not automatic consequences of maturation. Learning how to experience such qualities means learning how to use your mind. But these achievements, as important as they are, are achievements of impression, not expression. Surely there is more. That something more resides in matters of representation."*

Representation is . . . the process of transforming the contents of consciousness into a public form so that they can be stabilized, inspected, edited, and shared with others. Representation is what confers a publicly social dimension to cognition. Since forms of representation differ, the kinds of experience they make possible also differ. Different kinds of experience lead to different meanings, which, in turn, make different forms of understanding possible." (ibid: p. 6)

Three 'thoughts' emerge from my reading of Eisner's text.

- One is about validity or justification. This is the issue of the conferral of a socially mediated approval to the re-presentation of cognition.
- The second is that I view, as Eisner does later in his account, matters of the choice of presentational, or re-presentational form, as equally important for the 'inner' achievements of impression as the 'outer' achievements of expression.
- And my third thought is my emerging conviction of the link between these inner and outer directions, the role of re-vision involved in re-presentation. The crafting of re-presentation for a public audience has, in my experience, a significant impact on the quality of meaning, or understanding, I make. Mind-making, or learning, is crucially dependent, on this view, on revision.

Much of Eisner's argument is about alternative forms of re-presentation and their potential acceptance (validity) as research findings. In a later article he says: *"My conception of research is broad. I will count as research reflective efforts to study the world and to create ways to share what we have learned about it. Research can take the forms that echo the forms of the arts and humanities or those of the natural sciences. Its forms of data representation are open to invention. Ultimately its value as research is determined by the judgement of a critical community."* (Eisner 1997: p. 8)

This statement begs a question I will return to again under the heading Substance of my Research, which is the vexed issue of whether a first person inquiry is valid as a 'reflective effort to study the world'. The question which guides this chapter - and is it research? - is turned over by Eisner, as so many others in a contingent world of multiple truths, to 'the judgement of a critical community'. If this judgement is no longer to be based on a particular (scientific) method for 'telling the truth' then it, the judgement, has to turn, in my view, from notions of validity to justification. My guiding question might then be put as - so how do I justify my thesis as research? In order to address this revised question I want to turn to my chosen form of reflective practice, which is primarily writing, and then again to the question of its first person focus.

Writing as a Form of Reflective Practice.

I return to my first draft of this part of my 'methodology' chapter to capture something of the quality of my early sense of justification. In pursuing recognition for my chosen process within the field I was struck by the interest in form. I began to wonder whether my contribution might be about form as well as content.

I am consciously placing myself 'on the edge' of the academy, a world in which questions of method, validity and knowledge are hotly debated. I place myself there expecting to contribute to this discussion, for my research inquiry is as much about how I learn and know as about what I have learned, and both impact on my practice as teacher.

As luck or coincidence would have it, as I contemplated this new, 'grown up' attitude towards writing a 'methodology' chapter, the journal "Qualitative Inquiry, Volume 5, Number 3" was delivered through my door, a special issue on "Writing Life's History" edited by William G Tierney. In a most disturbingly moving piece by Peter Clough, "The Story of Rob", in which he discusses the crisis of schooling in the UK through a dramatic account, a persuasive rather than demonstrative "messy text", I found these two credos that Clough reckons speaks to the "crisis of representation". First, from Tierney himself, a plea that we should *"refrain from the temptation of either placing our work in relation to traditions or offering a defensive response. I increase my capacity neither for understanding nor originality by a defensive posture. To seek new epistemological and*

methodological avenues demands that we chart new paths rather than constantly return to well-worn roads and point out that they will not take us where we want to go." (Tierney 1998: p. 68).

So, I shall not be defensive. I approach this work naming myself as writer. This is my primary identity as researcher. I am using writing as a method of inquiry, inquiring into writing as a form of presentational knowing and discovering what it takes to act out my dream to become 'writer.'

As such my inquiry methodology is primarily through the process of writing, with its reflective and rigorous qualities. And my form, my presentation, is my evidence. Clough's second chosen credo speaks to this aspect. *"I have told the truth. The proof is in the things I have made – how they look to your mind's eye, whether you believe them, and whether they appeal to your heart."* (Sandelowski 1994: p.61). The proof is in the things I have made."

Which is essentially the point with which I concluded my section on integrity.

Integrity is in the eye of the reader.

(Now I am faced with a problem of sequencing once again. In choosing to re-place my Philosophical Reflection in to the next Section, What I Know, I have skipped past a discussion of my Practical Academy criteria of congruence and integrity. I have tried to maintain a 'logical' progression through the issues of validity and justification as I now view them at a re-vised state of perspective.

I will return to the issue of integrity under the heading of Substance, for that is where I am headed as a conclusion to the chapter.

I wonder again at the way my image of the 'bumpy wheel' turned into, in my attempt to re-present it to you, a propeller. I am interested in the notion that I might have to 'turn' the wheel a number of times in order to 'progress'.

But there are also moments when the wheel comes to a grinding stop. Or when the writing comes to a terrible pause - what is it that I am trying to say here?

I recognise that I have been in the process of a kind of post-rationalisation or post-validation of my instinctively chosen methodology. My methodology is characterised by reflection in which writing is its main 'method'. And I have been writing about my own experience of learning how to choose, including the choicefulness with which I have increasingly approached my practice as teacher. And I continue to 'feel' as researcher and teacher, that there is some considerable limitation in my method of writing because my

experience of 'knowing', at some level, does not translate through words other than, maybe, the poetic form. So, I have chosen to include, at various stages of my thesis, Interludes of artistic images coupled with pieces of music which are intended, almost, to say - "Look, listen, for there is a quality of truth here that I cannot write about."

But in a curious way in turning to 'Artists' for this consolation I am betraying one thread of my argument, which is that our salvation is to be found in becoming, ourselves, artists in the way we live our lives. So, I am striving to write, increasingly through my revisioning craft, in such a way that I can express the 'truth' of the ambiguity, provisionality and limitation of 'knowing' that I experience.

I am interested to notice, now, at the end of my research writing, that I have not chosen, despite my sense of being 'on the edge' of the academy, to submit a novel as my thesis. Eisner refers to this possibility in his address. Neither have I resorted to 'fiction', as Winter and his colleagues suggest, nor 'poetry' in any significant way. This may have simply been a lack of creativity on my part.

But my 'instinctive' process has been to try and 'craft' what I think of as 'ordinary' writing in a way which continues to convey the quality of my experience, despite the difficulties I have felt. The 'crafting' I refer to in my title has been this effort which I see transforming the 'ordinary' into the 'extraordinary'. I want to find a way of conveying through ordinary text the extraordinary quality I experience of living. For it is out of this extraordinary inner quality, its elusiveness, its texture and colour, that I turn outward into the ordinary business of acting. But there is this crucial domain, the imaginative domain of choice, which has the potential to transform the ordinary act into an artistic expression, life confirming and enhancing, even if it as simple as making and delivering a pot of tea.

The proof is in the things I have made.

Sometime I have to stop and set my pot on the shelf for you to judge. Let me just spin the wheel one more time, just lightly grazing the surface of the clay with my fingers for a slight correction here, an embellishment there!

I want to include my 'justification' for the interiority of my reflective writing project and my insistence on its imaginative quality, even if it is presented as fiction!)

> Writing Narrative of the Self.

There is a lovely point in Laurel Richardson's contribution to the Handbook of Qualitative Research at which she says, "*Writing these frankly subjective narratives, ethnographers are somewhat relieved of the problems of speaking for the "Other," because they are the Other in their texts.*" (Richardson 1994: p. 521)

The particular 'form' of writing Richardson is referring to at this point is an evocative narrative of the self, "*a highly personalized, revealing text in which an author tells stories about his or her own lived experience*". (ibid)

'Telling stories' is a revealing clue about the difficulty I feel I am facing in a separation which seems to occur between fact and fiction. But that is to anticipate the next stage of my discussion. It also, the phrase 'telling stories', tends to emphasise the expressive nature of evocative narratives. My initial interest, as I experienced the potential for learning through writing, was the evocative quality of early drafts. I have described earlier the emotional 'grounding' that this process has, but there is a residual ambiguity in that early 'making sense' which can so easily slip away in efforts to 'explain'.

Although I certainly started out with an interest in 'presentational knowing,' in the expressive sense that I now distinguish as re-presentational, I have gradually become more engaged in writing as a way of learning rather than as presenting knowing. In terms of the 'extended epistemology' I have been using, writing as a form of presentational knowing occupies the space between experiential and propositional knowing. In its re-presentational form, I might conjecture, it acts as the expression of propositional knowing in a way which turns to action, or practice. My concern for presentation has been to maintain a congruence between my experience of learning through reflexive writing and my 'writing up' for a reader. And in the 'writing up' process, which I have subsequently described as revisionary practice, I have tried to maintain something of the same ambiguous quality as in the initial learning. Action, or practice, in this conception, maintains the provisional aspect of 'multiple truths', reflected in re-presentational forms which do not collapse into false certainty.

Denzin, in "Interpretive Ethnography" (1997), argues from the impossibility of separating out the writing about research from the act of researching. In my MPhil transfer paper I noted that "writing, for me, has a dual role in this inquiry. Writing is a form of self reflection. It is a way I can access thoughts and feelings which are otherwise locked behind

what seems like a sealed enclosure. And writing is a form of communication with which I am experimenting – it is my emergent practice.” (RGL, Mphil Transfer Paper)

So, my method is thoroughly inter-woven with my epistemic sense. Denzin describes this form of writing rather delightfully as Ethnopoetics: *“Ethnopoetics and narratives of the self are messy texts: They always return to the writerly self – a self that spills over into the world being inscribed. This is a writerly self with a particular hubris that is neither insolent nor arrogant. The poetic self is simply willing to put itself on the line and to take risks. These risks are predicated on a simple proposition: This writer’s personal experiences are worth sharing with others. Messy texts make the writer a part of the writing project.”* (Denzin 1997: p. 225)

And Richardson recognises writing as a method of inquiry. *“Writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable.”* (Richardson 1994: p. 516)

Here is my concern for **congruence** as a criterion for validity or a justification for the method I have adopted. As far as possible I am seeking for an integrated congruence in which both the writing as research method and writing as ethnographic account are one and the same. I am interested to notice that in this effort I have had to resort to at least three 'levels' or 'styles' of writing. But here again my instinctive resort has generated a crucial aspect of my methodology, which is its revisionary aspect.

As I write I learn to see differently. And as I re-write, or revise, I learn to hear differently, too. I am opened up to different choices. But these choices are choices. Learning does not lead to certainty, in my experience. Learning is an imaginative activity in which uncertainty, or ambiguity, is inherent.

> The ambiguity inherent in the imagination.

“Narratives of the self”, Richardson suggests, *“use the writing techniques of fiction – (they) seek to meet the literary criteria of fiction.”* (ibid)

Eisner suggests, *“alternative forms of data representation can provide what might be called “productive ambiguity.” By productive ambiguity, I mean that the material presented is more evocative than denotative, and in its evocation, it generates insight and*

invites attention to complexity. Unlike the traditional ideal of conventional research, some alternative forms of data representation result in less closure and more plausible interpretations of the meaning of the situation. Multiple perspectives make our engagement with the phenomena more complex. Ironically, good research often complicates our lives." (Eisner 1997: p. 8)

And Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, in their argument for the use of the 'aesthetic' or 'artistic' in reflective practice make the point that *"when a number of different situations are juxtaposed and set into a closely worked relationship within the unifying artistic structure, then the unity which emerges has a sort of generality, which is partly what the disparate elements share and partly the 'train of thought' started by the relationship between them. - - - - -This 'symbolic' quality which the artistic structure gives to particular events is both a sort of general truth and at the same time a sort of openness and undecidability. It gives a sense that these events have indeed been understood (by being placed within a generalisable pattern of meanings) and at the same time it gives a sense that any attempt at a final and complete interpretation of them is bound to be inadequate, because, in the end, actual events, people and situations are too complex, too multifaceted to be wholly contained within any formula. All of which, of course, echoes many of the key themes of the reflective paradigm for understanding the events of professional practice".* (Winter et al 1999: pp. 202 & 203)

I have quoted from three sources I have found profoundly helpful in supporting (justifying) my instinctive wish to incorporate the 'aesthetic' quality I perceive in my 'writerly' self to my 'research' self. But I am troubled by what seems to be an argument to separate out the 'fictional' aspect of 'imaginative' or 'artistic' 'creative' writing from more orthodox 'factional' narrative text. Here is my own dichotomy between the 'explanatory' and the 'expressive' landing. (As described in A Dialectic Thou with its subsequent return to a discussion of the dialectic).

Winter et al include Barbara Hardy's statement about narrative: *"We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others."* And Hardy apparently argues that *"Narrative . . . is not to be regarded as an aesthetic invention used by artists to control, manipulate, and order existence, but as a primary act of mind transferred to art from life."* (ibid: p. 210)

My argument for the Way of Beauty (see Section 4) is that we should precisely retrieve our propensity for narrative and recognise its ambiguous nature as guiding all that we think and do. We 'make up' stories.

Another great quotation included by Winter et al sums up my present (contingent) understanding of what I have been trying to 'research', in 'learning to live my life well' through a reflective practice largely based on writing and revision:

"Reflective learning may be conceptualised as a response to postmodernism, as a positive and creative approach to the prospect of living with contingency . . . variety, relativism and ambivalence." (ibid: p. 193)

My personal response to the liberation of postmodernism is to re-validate my imagination as the 'theatre of contention' in which inner reflections and outer actions are mediated. I will rehearse this argument more fully in Section 3 in the chapter on The Imagination. My meaning here is that the imagination is the faculty we use to 'construct' knowing, to order our perceptions. The implication, it seems to me, of the notion that we have this freedom to think is that our actions, and the choices that lead to them, are inherently ambiguous or contingent.

This is the substance of my research, its content. I want to end this chapter with a note on its (my research) substance in terms of methodology. In doing so I turn to my own criterion, from the Practical Academy, of **critical distance**.

Substance in Method - Critical Distance as a Test for Validity.

If truth can not be validated, because there is no such 'thing' in a postmodern conception, then I assume we resort to some judgement about the process of truth seeking in research methodology, to include a recognition of its ambiguous quality. This has been the substance of my earlier discussion about my chosen form of writing as reflective practice. But 'just writing' is surely not enough. There has to be, in my practical experience as assessor of AMOC dissertations, some quality which transcends description and introduces reflection. I have suggested as a criterion for this distinction the notion of '**critical distance**'.

At an earlier stage in drafting this Part of my chapter on methodology, I was describing my struggle to get down on paper what my method is to Sam, my younger son,

over the phone. “Yes, well,” he said, “what you do is read and write, isn’t it? You can write about that a bit!” And this is what I wrote:

But it does not seem quite enough. It is not quite accurate, either, in that I do talk about it, too, and “reflect” on my various areas of practice. In a way I am “doing” it, researching or inquiring, all the time, at least at some level.

So, what do I actually do, by way of inquiry? If I go back to that section of my first, Diploma transfer paper this question arose: “But all this is just being me, a somewhat troubled, re-invigorated, ageing member of the cosmic community.

What would justify calling this research?” So, the question remains.

I went on then to refer to Bill Torbert’s notion of Action Inquiry, somehow particularly appreciating the ‘confessional rigour’ as I noticed it then of “The Power of Balance”, (Torbert 1991), reinforced when I had the opportunity to meet him at Bath. We talked about the effort of being constantly “in inquiry.”

I noted: “there is something in the degree of his pursuit of Action Inquiry, not just as a research methodology but as a way of being human, participating consciously in the world, that (speaks to me) - - - -so, yes, maybe I am just continuing to be me, but I am being me so clearly and consciously, so regularly reflexively that I can justify my pretension as researcher. This reflects a view about depth, that by digging deeper I can find some truth which is applicable beyond just me.” (RGL Diploma Paper)

But there was something in that conversation that I chose to have which is crucial to my method, as distinct from that described by Torbert. It was not just the exhausting quality of being constantly alert, ever curious, but a sense of where the inquiry is going.

I am more interested in being and becoming, and learning about this more subtle process of development, than in action. My practice development is ‘on becoming’ a writer and how this affects my approach to other practice areas, such as my consulting and teaching, certainly, but how is it to become a writer, believing in a certain quality of poetic wisdom. How is it to live with a commitment to compassion and responsibility? Indeed, how is it to learn the value of inaction, to put those early and formative injunctions about busyness and “doing” to one side and to recognise the power of being in relation to the power of doing. What might the notion of elegant frugality have to teach me about material possessions?

(I include the substance (how these 'important' words offer multiplicity of meanings!) of this earlier draft despite some overlap and repetition - qualities I asked you to indulge in my Preface. Living my Life Well, through reflective learning, seems to involve a constant succession of choices in the face of paradoxical imperatives. I sense this is 'living life as dialectic', a phrase which has entered my lexicon as a kind of development or re-formulation of the Dialectic Thou. An element of 'critical distance' I associate with the reflective learning or revisionary learning, necessary to make a choice relatively free from constraining pattern, is to be 'fully aware' of the inherent paradox. Choice, in this formulation, can never be clear or precise - it has to be contingent).

Torbert offers a formulation of reflective learning in the final chapter of "Power of Balance." He asks: *"What is the art - - of living inquiry? How can our inquiry itself transform over a lifetime, gradually revealing itself - - to be the source of the nonviolent power of balance? The very questions themselves suggest that there may be kinds of inquiry, kinds of attention, and kinds of knowledge - a kind of balance among mind, passion, and body - of a fundamentally higher calibre than Western scientific inquiry and knowledge generates. - - - How are we to think about a kind of inquiry that goes beyond "thinking about" the world outside to a direct experiencing of the relationship between the world inside and the world outside?"* (Torbert 1991: p. 258)

This speaks powerfully to my notion that "leading my life well" is the product of paying good attention to that overlap between the world inside and the world outside. The relationship between the inner and the outer is, I believe, the imagination and a 'vigorous imagination' enlarges this overlap to provide a profound awareness of self and situation - and it is out of this awareness that we may choose, wisely, to act or not to act.

Judi Marshall captures this process in her description of 'living life as inquiry' thus: *"By living life as inquiry I mean a range of beliefs, strategies and ways of behaving which encourage me to treat little as fixed, finished, clear-cut. Rather I have an image of living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question. This involves, for example, attempting to open to continual question what I know, feel, do and want, and finding ways to engage actively in this questioning and process its stages. It involves seeking to monitor how what I do relates to what I espouse, and to review this explicitly, possibly in collaboration with others, if there seems to be a mismatch. It involves seeking to maintain*

curiosity, through inner and outer arcs of attention, about what is happening and what part I am playing in creating and sustaining patterns of action, interaction and non-action. It also involves seeking to pay attention to the 'stories' I tell about myself and the world and recognising that these are all constructions, influenced by my purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meanings and values." (Marshall 1999: pp. 156-7)

When I read Torbert I am somewhat overwhelmed by the seriousness with which he portrays 'living inquiry,' particularly its association with action. Marshall induces a rather different concern in me, which is about the nature of curiosity. For I realise that my curiosity is distinctly limited. I am mainly interested in confirming what I think I already know! I may be, and am, surprised from time to time. But in a curiously paradoxical way I find that my openness to new experience, to new ways of hearing, is helped by my appreciation for the limited ground upon which I stand.

In something like the same way that Bill Torbert describes himself as 'two-faced like Janus', one face focusing on solving problems in the here and now, the other attending to what is really asked of me in this situation, and who is asking, the monk's questions, eternal questions, I feel my way of inquiring is curiously ambivalent, operating in different dimensions. I am both open and closed, curious and curiously uninterested. In seeking greater awareness I have limited my field of view. My inquiry is into being and becoming – hence my reaction against the 'action' in action inquiry, for I increasingly value inaction, not doing so much, not imagining that it will have much effect. And I make no claim to be constantly alert or open to multiple possibilities. I am content, much of the time, to be as I am – and accept the consequences.

(Which is in its own way paradoxical. I 'see' differently when I am aesthetically excited and I 'hear' differently when my defences are down. I have recognised these different ways or stages of learning - the basis for the ground shifting from under my feet is that I feel firmly grounded!)

So, I claim a version of "living inquiry", focused on being and becoming. And I return to the Vico quote: *"Poetic Wisdom must have begun with a metaphysics - - - felt and imagined - - - all robust sense and vigorous imagination."*

My claim is to a method akin to 'Living Life as Inquiry.' My version of living inquiry is compassionate and responsible in the sense of knowing my, and limitations. I am

guided by my ‘attentional phrases’ to a way of being which is, I hope, wise in the sense of poetic wisdom.

My ‘justification’ for the substance of my thesis is, in the end, a judgement of its integrity. This is the third of the criteria I extracted from my reflections on the Practical Academy.

I am searching for a way of understanding a way of knowing which is, I fundamentally believe, beyond understanding, and so my methodology is necessarily expressive in its nature, fundamentally concerned with the congruence of its form. I am making suggestions, it seems to me, which might ‘make sense’ but at an impressionistic level.

Hence my introduction of the notion of ‘poetic wisdom.’ Let me complete here the passage I quoted from briefly in A Dialectic Thou.

If you turn to the last page of the thesis you will see Gardener Vannier sat under his straw hat, as painted by Paul Cezanne. This picture, in its Tate Gallery poster size, dominates one wall of my den. Gardener Vannier is an aspiration, an inspiration – he is my daemon Goat. He contains, somehow, the combination of qualities I am striving to describe, a craftsman prepared to work with the best combination of senses at his disposal, certain in the knowledge of a meaning to his life that is beyond comprehension. His is a poetic wisdom, as represented in this key quotation from Vico in his account of the religious beliefs of the first, “primitive”, men:-

“From these first men, all the philosophers and philologists should have begun their investigations of the ancient gentiles And they should have begun with metaphysics, which seeks its proofs not in the external world but within the modifications of the mind of him who mediates it. For since this world has certainly been made by men, it is within these modifications that its principles should have been sought. And human nature, so far as it is like that of animals, carries with it this property, that the senses are its sole way of knowing things.

Hence poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination.”

(quoted from Pompa 1990: pp. 43-4)

I want to close my methodological inquiry where I first started it with reference to a test for validity which has sustained me from the time I wrote my first Diploma transfer paper. I called it the ‘presentational test’ – do I make sense in the sense of do I awaken your senses? So, I should like to include a passage from that earlier paper:

I believe that, in some way, through this period of raw- and re-search I have “come to my senses.” I have learned to listen to voices outside my head. I have also learned to listen to the voices in my head differently, or am learning, which is the part of my account about growing up. But this is about “making sense – enlivening the senses.”

From a key work in my period of research, fortunately augmented by the grace of CARPP by meeting the author, David Abrams, in his “The Spell of the Sensuous.”

“Here I am less concerned with the ‘literal’ truth of the assertions that I have made in this work than I am concerned with the kinds of relationships that they make possible. “Literal truth” is entirely an artifact of alphabetic literacy to be literally true originally meant to be true to “the letter of scripture” – to “the letter of the law.” In this work I have tried to reacquaint the reader with a mode of awareness that precedes and underlies the literate intellect, to a way of thinking and speaking that strives to be faithful not to the written record but to the sensuous world itself, and to the other bodies or beings that surround us.

For such an oral awareness, to explain is not to present a set of finished reasons, but to tell a story. That is what I have attempted in these pages. It is an unfinished story, told from various angles, sketchy in some parts, complete with gaps and questions and unrealized characters. But it is a story, nonetheless, not a wholly determinate set of facts.

Of course, not all stories are successful. There are good stories and mediocre stories and downright bad stories. How are they to be judged? If they do not aim at a static or “literal” reality, how can we discern whether one telling of events is any better or more worthy than another? The answer is this: a story must be judged according to whether it makes sense. And “making sense” must here be understood in its most direct meaning: to make sense is to enliven the senses. A story that makes sense is one that stirs the senses from their slumber, one that opens the eyes and the ears to their real surroundings, tuning the tongue to the actual tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the skin. To

make sense is to release the body from the constraints imposed by outworn ways of speaking, and hence to renew and rejuvenate one's felt awareness of the world.

It is to make sense to wake up to where they are." (Abrams 1996: pp. 264-265)

I am intending to apply this 'presentational test' in two ways. This is a passage that speaks to me profoundly. It obviously touches a nerve as writer and story-teller – this is my wish, to tell stories in such a way that they enliven the reader's senses. But it touches me more deeply than that, hits at one of those soft seams of recognition that suggest to me an older, more basic and fundamental way of knowing. This is when something "feels" right in a way – there is a measure of coherence, elegance, ethical rightness about that which the senses quicken to. So, this is an epistemic test I apply to myself and my process – are my senses awakened by my discoveries.

And it is a test I would like you to apply in your own judgement of the value and integrity of my account. Clearly your perspective will be different from mine, which is the source of my interest in Gadamerian hermeneutics.

As I understand Gadamerian hermeneutics, the meaning of a text is not something which is in the text itself; rather meaning is always meaning for someone such that it is relative to an interpreter. Meaning arises out of the relationship between the text and those trying to understand it – it is the product of an interaction of two subjects. This might be put by saying that meaning is only potentially present in any text, and that this potential meaning becomes actualised only in and through the process of interpretation itself.

In a review of Gadamer's analysis as it applies to selecting research criteria, Dean Garratt and Phil Hodgkinson argue that: *"Gadamer's analysis suggests that although the content and form of a research report are significant, they are not in themselves central to the experience of reading and understanding that report. We do not understand a report by slicing it up, in the way that many lists of criteria implicitly suggest. This is because those sliced parts of the whole report cannot be understood except in relation to that whole and vice versa. Similarly neither the report nor its parts can be effectively separated from the context within which the reading takes place. Rather, the meaning of a report is derived within and through the experience of reading itself."* (Garratt, Hodgkinson 1998: p. 529)

Integrity, therefore, is a test to apply in your reading.

I conclude that there is no such thing as truth, but there are different possibilities and perspectives which guide each of us in the conduct of our daily lives. Sometimes I still despair and imagine that one day the sun will rise to a scorched earth. On other days I

choose to believe that I can make a difference, by living my own life well. If, in the process, I have some limited effect on how others live their lives, through my various practices as teacher, consultant, writer, father, friend, husband, then so much the better.

And I believe there is a way of hope open to us all. This is a way of beauty, a way of love and compassion. It requires us to become the artists of our own lives.

A conclusion

So, is it research, then, that I have been engaged in? Does it satisfy the criteria of my chosen critical community? Will my side door open and welcome me?

In the end I am happy to submit this work as an example of an explicit attempt to relate what living in a participatory world might be like. I have struggled with issues of action, outcome and practical knowing – but the struggle continues to inform my practice as teacher and feels like an important step towards becoming writer. I have concentrated as much on the significance of not knowing as on ways of knowing, particularly in the sense of learning. Who am I to claim significant worthiness?

And in the end I am prepared to offer this as a limited work, a transient work, maybe, in the hope that it might just inspire further research into the edge of knowing as we experience a limited hold on continued life on the planet we have so carelessly endangered. I make no claim towards enduring consequence through an integration of first-, second-, and third-person research practice. I have not set out to ‘alter institutional patterns of behaviour.’ Any such impact that I may have is consequent upon my wish to become – well, me! And to be prepared to share some of my experience as best I can.

I have to end with a poem which seems to me to pursue Rilke's suggestion that Now Could Be The Time (included in the Preface) This is by Ben Okri, an extract from Mental Fight:

**“Never again will we stand
On the threshold of a new age.
We that are here and now are touched
In some mysterious way
With the ability to change
And make the future.
Those who wake to the wonder**

**Of this magic moment,
Who wake to the possibilities
Of this charged conjunction,
Are the chosen ones who have chosen
To act, to free the future, to open it up,
To consign prejudices to the past,
To open up the magic casement
Of the human spirit
Onto a more shining world.”**

A NOTE ON HEARING DIFFERENTLY

Ist draft November 1999.

2nd draft March 2001

3rd draft May 2002

Introduction.

I have noticed in the latter stages of my revision (roughly the period November 2001 to May 2002) the significance of the 'learning' statement - "I notice I am hearing differently". I have written about this aspect of my learning process in the chapter Growing Up as it relates, especially, to my sense of learning to hear non-defensively. As that chapter attested, the particular breakthrough was facilitated by Donna sitting down with me to listen to the tape of a critical supervision group conversation and coaching me to listen carefully to the content and intent of the questions I was failing to hear.

As a consequence of that experience I decided to experiment with an additional research method. In November 1999 I had the opportunity to 'retreat' to "Seasons - a Center for Renewal" at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan. While Donna joined Peter Reason in facilitating a meeting of academics in the "Meeting House", discussing the topic "Towards a Participatory Worldview", I sat with my tape recorder and computer and listened to my archive of supervision group tapes.

My method was to type in note form the taped conversation from each supervision group session, a sort of shorthand record, then step back to make some sense of the learning. My chosen method of 'stepping back' was to take a walk around the lake in the Center's grounds, a sort of contemplative critical reflection. I then re-worked, or re-vised a description of the session noting the learning involved through this process.

I completed a review of the tape recordings from my first year of research, from January 1996 to the point at which I presented my Diploma transfer paper one year later in January of 1997. This involved nine taped supervision group conversations.

(I have not continued with this 'additional' research method on anything like the same concentrated and rigorous scale subsequently. I have relied on my 'core' research method of writing, revising and conversing. This is mainly a trade-off of time versus result. I found the particular learning from that first year review very powerful, as I intend to try to convey in the remainder of this summary note. Somehow its effect was to 'get me moving' with what I discovered to be my research intent and method. I then felt able to review, on a more selective basis, tapes of particular supervision group conversations with an understanding that I was listening for a dissonance between tone and content in my responses to comment or question.

I have also maintained an appreciation for 'contemplative walking' as a method of applying 'critical subjectivity' to my work in progress. I could easily digress into a eulogy of the benefits of walking, but will resist that temptation!)

I 'discovered', in the process of trying to capture the quality of these successive stages of reflection, both something of the significance of what I have latterly called 'reflective revision' along with the 'forms' I have experimented with to 're-present' my method in practice. I include here my 'original' statement about this aspect of my process:

I have tried to represent three versions of myself through the medium of three different formats. The 'straight' reportage of my self as researcher engaged in the supervision group conversations is captured, as best I can distinguish it, in the past tense in 'normal' format. My 'observing' self, the reflexive practitioner engaged in the transcription and sense making of the tapes is represented in (*Italic*). I have tried to keep these observing comments in the present tense although it is time past, to maintain the integrity of the account at that time. I am now, in March 2001, a reviser attempting to capture the meaning of these accounts for a further, distanced, purpose – as an example of my method in practice. I have made some further commentary in this latest incarnation in the familiar (blue format.) These latter comments are also in the present tense, which I accept might be rather confusing – but I hope that the distinguishing formats will alert you to the different time-scales, and therefore the different versions of myself, who are speaking.

(I am interested to notice, on further reflection, how I had already identified myself as 'reviser', clear about the distancing effect of this process. The additional quality I have subsequently noticed is the impact of 'revising for another'. It is this shift from the inner to

the outer domain which adds a critical dimension to the process of revision I am now (in May 2002) calling revisionary reflection).

It is my intention in this 'summary note' to try and capture the main points of my learning through this process without subjecting you to a full display of the notes I took of the recorded sessions along with the subsequent revisions. My purpose is to capture the quality of learning I am naming 'hearing differently'.

My proposed 'form' for this task is a series of 'notes', quite distinct from the narrative style I have been using elsewhere in my thesis. I am interested to 'see' if I can capture and re-present the essence of my learning in a succinct way. I will offer:-

- **the 'title' I chose to name each session along with its date**
- **a brief statement of my sense of role and research topic**
- **an 'extract from my notes on the supervision group conversation**
- ***an extract from my 'first' reflection***
- **an extract from my reflective revision.**

Session 1 – 30/1/96 – Retreat!

Role and Research Topic: I arrive for the first workshop of the CARPP programme as a consultant and a Business Director of Ashridge Consulting Ltd., in which role I had been 'leading' an attempt to create an organisation which was 'managed' from a set of presumptions around community - i.e. with a democratic form of leadership and accountability based on peer contracts.

I had recently, within the last few months, been considering my continuing role in consultancy and had become interested in a new possibility to lead a research centre at Ashridge on the topic of management learning. This seemed to fit well with my then preoccupation with what I called the 'Myth of Management.'

So, a number of strands had coincided in a hurry – my thoughts about a change of role, fuelled by my frustrations in the consulting group, along with the longer held notion of researching for a PhD on the topic of 'paradigm shift.'

Extract from notes of conversation: I reported my sense of anger, outrage at organisations and what they do, as I saw it, to people – the 'shadow' qualities they somehow engender. And I spoke of my personal reaction which had been to retreat – to

withdraw from the 'front line' of management into consultancy, an 'off-line' development role. And how I was in a further stage of retreat, considering a move 'further back' into research. And, in particular, at that stage, how I was retreating from a leadership role within ACL, away from potential confrontation with the Managing Director of the consultancy.

I commented on this as a familiar pattern – retreat - especially away from possible confrontation. I had a still vital memory of the strategies I would use as a young teenager at school in Bruton, Somerset, to avoid the town bullies who lurked in wait, it seemed, on school boarders, somehow a legitimate target in the class divide of town and gown.

(Initial reflection: And so I begin, in this first, tentative conversation, to explore the patterns in myself, my personal development, which 'caused' me to see organisations in this combative, tyrannical way, and why I react as I do.)

I was challenged by the supervision group to question my negative framing, both of the general situation in organisations as I was reporting it and of my own reaction as retreat, or quitting. I was invited to begin an action inquiry into my decision making process, to consider how these questions of anger and inclusion were being played out in the way I chose to see things.

(Subsequent, distanced, reflection: I am, in this subsequent drafting, aware of pieces that I wrote at the time which have subsequently been overtaken and left behind. But, in a way, they are all part of the learning process and contain pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that I am trying to offer you as a comprehensive and coherent account. But I cannot include it all, obviously. What do you need to be able to maintain the thread of my story? This is my revision project. And the problem is that each time I try to make my work more accessible, it seems, I am in danger of adding another layer of complexity, which then needs further explanation!)

Session 2 – 1/3/96 – the start of workshop 2 – Continuing Consultancy.

Role and Research Topic: I reported my decision to stay in the consultancy rather than to move into a research role.

I recognised that my 'practice,' presumably the subject or vehicle for my research, would continue to be organisational consultancy. I spoke of the access afforded by the

consulting role as a means to researching into the condition of management I called the **Myth of Management**.

Note of the conversation: Much of the tape is taken up with a description of four organisations I was consulting to at the time and what I described as the “grandiosity” of the senior managers who were my clients, at least contractually. I was struggling with the sheer lack of grounded appreciation of these folk for the reality of their organisations – the game that seemed to keep them separated out in their upper stories in a fantasy realm.

And I spoke of my weariness at continuing to perch on an uncomfortable edge, somehow apparently working to their agendas while all the time my real concern was for the reality experienced by the mass of folk being subjected to this mad mix of dishonesty and manipulation.

But I was also aware, somehow, that these senior folk were not necessarily mad or bad, but that somehow the nature of large organisations and the myth of management had led them to behave as though they were. And I was caught up in the game, not knowing whether I wanted to continue or to retreat.

And my practice felt as though it was under threat, feeling tenuous.

I was invited, by the group, to read Bill Torbert's work again, this time to consider his notion of the Ironist, the person who is able to see from outside the system, play within it and transform it at the same time. This was an alternative formulation to my own notion of being an insurgent, in contact with a constituency of middle aged middle and senior managers who felt trapped and alienated by the system, caught in a responsible and committed web yet knowing, somehow, that it (their work) did not really count any longer – the myth lived.

And, of course, I was in the same dilemma. It was as though by claiming myself as researcher I could distance myself further from the nub of the dilemma. Do I try to make it palatable for myself or retreat?

Could I, for example, in the practical case of the consulting group, influence an organisational form or structure which would embody the notions of democracy, mutual dependence and peer accountability I aspired to? I had some opportunity at this time to help create a constitution and structure with this intention.

So I spoke of trying to find a way as a hybrid consultant/researcher to gain access to my constituency of managers to write about the myth and in some way influence them, as well as my colleagues of another way of seeing management..

(Initial reflection: At this stage, then, I seem to have found a working compromise, with my practice as consultant/writer and my topic resolved and remaining as 'the myth of management.' And I have some sense of influencing the world in which I practice both directly within the consultancy and indirectly through my consulting and researching.)

(Subsequent, subsequent revisionary reflection (i.e. in May 2002 'final' revision): I am really struggling with succinctness here. I am deleting chunks of text and while I do so am noticing marginal comments made by Judi on my earlier draft requesting more clarity. I think I will just have to continue with this process and trust that my intention shines through.)

Session 3 – 2/3/96 – end of the workshop – a re-frame.

Just a day later and the subject of my research has completely changed.

(The discussion I listen to on the tape is really not about my practice. It is a clear statement - overheard, as it were, from a critical distance - of my disinterest in management.

But I seem to be very excited about a “re-framing” contained in changing the title of my research topic from myth of management to myth in management.)

I have been re-connected, through the workshop engagement, with my original research interest. This is the question as to whether we can know we are in the midst of a so-called paradigm shift. This is the topic I spoke to Donna about when the idea of a PhD first came up. And really the fascination for me is the conjunction of the faculty of imagination with the psychological and the ecological. I had been carrying around a diagram of these three dimensions which I drew after the first workshop session as expressing what I am really interested in.

(I am amused, as I listen to the tape, by the absolute disinterest with which I received suggestions for further reading around the idea of myth in management – none of which I have followed up for clearly by then, my interest had moved on, or rather back to the issues I addressed in my period of raw-search.)

(My observing self notices my acting or participating self engaged in some kind of liminal state. The apparent certainty of my statements as I entered the workshop have been transformed into a confusion, a contradiction, of interests. I notice myself hanging on to the myth I see in management, apparently satisfied that somehow converting the 'of' to 'in' makes all the difference. Whereas I can also here my utter disaffection with management and an energetic appreciation for some other topic, which might at this stage be named as the imagination).

Session 4 – April '96, day 1 – “Deeply disquieted and dislocated.”

(These are the emotional words that penetrate through a mass of stuff about me, us, them, a formulation for “proper” research I had gleaned from a paper written by Judi Marshall and Peter Reason.

My observing self selects the title for this session as a consequence of hearing an emotional undertone to the confused statements which purport to be a reconciliation of the re-framings that I left with in March. It is as though a discussion about methodology has replaced a discussion about topic, whilst the essential confusion of purpose remains.)

I started by announcing myself, in methodological terms, to be much more interested now in action inquiry, essentially into self, rather than a co-operative inquiry project into some aspect of management.

It was clear that I was deeply engaged in a ‘dislocation’ – a geographical move, with Donna, to our home in Devon and trying to work out what this might mean for my work base, whether I could secure work in the Bristol area and west, or whether I might have to contemplate going independent. This was ‘for me’.

It was also apparent that I was still trying to establish the notion of ACL as a learning community, with a newly minted role as ‘development focaliser’ as my base. But it was also clear that the continuing financial performance issues in the organisation were really dominating the debate, or rather, dominating the silence. For we seemed to be talking much about development and peer accountability but not really getting anywhere while we go silent on the judgements of individual performance, including my own ‘failure’ to deliver the required number of revenue earning days. This was ‘for us’.

And I discussed my consulting practice with three current clients, in each of which I seem to have been engaged in trying to model a community leadership role. I noted that I seemed to have shifted from my 'normal' focus on individual development to trying to help groups of folk take more initiative, find their voice. This is 'for them'.

(My observing, or listening, self knows what is to follow. With the benefit of hindsight I can hear the false certainty of the presentation).

Session 5 – April '96, day 2 – 'Dad' makes it worse.

I heard myself making a substantial and skillful presentation to a new supervision group, this time with Peter rather than Judi as supervisor, in which I set out what sounds like a coherent account of a clear set of nesting inquiries:-

Me as leader in ACL

Us as ACL trying to become a learning community

Them as managers, or organisations, trying to become "humane", an alternative to the prevailing myth.

So, I had further cemented the me/us/them frame as a kind of foundation with the possibility of a personal action inquiry for me, a co-operative inquiry for us, and some kind of collaborative methodology for them, all very neat and logical.

But early in the discussion I alluded to my sense of continuing confusion.

(It is almost as though the neat symmetry and coherence of my proposal perfectly distorts, as in some kind of fairground mirror, the incoherence and confusion of what my inquiry was really about – dislocation and disquiet)

I left with a clear statement of intent "to get started", with the issue of ACL as a learning organisation as a focus for an initial co-operative inquiry cycle, to be written up alongside a collection of my internal discussion papers.

(I wonder, my reflexive self, as I wander back from the meeting house after a mid-morning break, whether I should be including, as a good reflective practitioner, the circumstances of my writing, for they surely impact on what I choose to notice from the tapes.

I have a feeling that there is something about the circumstances of my being here, at the Fetzer Institute, which is affecting my hearing. I have a heightened sense of my

'apprenticeship' as academic in that I am here as Donna's husband, simply because we asked if I could share her room in 'retreat'. I am an uninvited guest. And Donna is here working with a group of academics, a number of whom I am referring to in my work. They are just down the path and I am up here in my room, separated by – well – by the fact that they are 'in' and I am 'out', at least for the time being, of the 'academy.'

I am captured by something in the quality of the writing in Judi's draft chapter for the handbook on inquiry Peter is joint-editing – a piece she calls self-reflective inquiry practices. Surely the circumstances, my outer arc of attention, as Judi describes it, affects critically my inner arc, as I re-connect with the story I have told of what my research is about and how I intend to conduct it. Or am conducting it!)

It is Sunday morning. I have been at this task now for about three half day writing sessions and am conscious that the tapes I have listened to and commented on so far represent about 1/7th of the total – so the task will take time. But it feels like really good process, genuinely reflective and potentially rich in understanding my own learning and development. I am thoroughly fascinated by the sub-text running through the sessions so far – my sense of my 'real' inquiry being continuously up-staged and dominated by what I now think of as my "responsible" or "legitimate" inquiry topic.

And I think it is this sense of the difference between the "real" and the "legitimate" which is being played out in my role as uninvited guest.

I return to my task feeling dispirited by my sense of dis-satisfaction with my role, at not being a creator, a 'real' writer - another version of the separation I feel between the reality and the aspiration. And I think that what I am noticing about this task I have set myself, the intention or aspiration of which is to be methodologically rigorous or systematic, is its curious sense of separation. I am writing about what I have talked about. And I have been talking about what I think I have been researching about. Which is patently not 'true' - it is not the reality. So how can I possibly represent accurately what is 'true' in a sufficiently rigorous way?)

Session 6 – May '96 – Disillusioned, Dislocated and Distressed.

(You may have noticed the absence of **role description** - it seems that it is getting embedded in the reported conversation, so I don't want to make this more complicated than it needs to be!)

I reported on Congress, the meeting of the ACL consulting group which was intended to adopt the constitutional and structural arrangement I had been influential in designing. This had been my latest attempt to develop in practice the notion of a democratic, interdependent, learning community of consultants. But they did not adopt them. Indeed, I reported that the only two people to speak of ourselves as a community in these terms were the Managing Director and myself. **I was disillusioned.**

Actually to be more accurate, I started my verbal report by once again noting how I had been leaving Bath fired up with clarity and commitment and how I returned each time once again confused.

And I went on to announce, briefly and as though it was related, that I had decided that I must leave Ashridge and go independent by April 1997.

But I then went on to talk about my research and my continuing role at Ashridge as though nothing had changed. **I was dislocated.**

I reported on my inquiry into my own role and process as co-designer and co-leader of Congress. In particular I noted how I had been marginalised as a passionate advocate of community, reporting my intention to adopt a more inquiring approach, allowing for the possibility of community re-emerging out of the structure of accountability groups we had formed. And how I could be too quick and definite, apparently, with my design proposals.

(So, this was a definite reflection on my practice as leader in the particular context of ACL, but also a reflection of my wider practice as consultant and subsequently teacher. The balance between closure and listening I mentioned subsequently formed a kind of catch-phrase, "balancing advocacy with inquiry" which continues to act as a point of reference for my inquiry.)

The conversation ended with an expectation of my research proceeding as previously discussed, with a particular emphasis on a joint inquiry with the Managing Director and other colleagues about the continuing split of the commercial versus the community, in which we seemed both to be interested but polarised.

In a way it seemed as though the three streams of the personal, the Ashridge consulting community and the myth of management were merging particularly into the continuing struggle within ACL and my leadership or influence in it. - **I was distressed.**

(But once again with the benefit of hindsight, I can hear in my report on tape an underlying tone which I can now notice as a distinctly false evenness of delivery and content. I imagine myself as coach or facilitator or counsellor – how would I have been hearing myself in the room at the time, I wonder).

Session 7 – 26/6/96 - Right on the edge – retreat.

I started by suggesting that my research topic seems to have become ever more personal.

I reported on events at Ashridge. I had been invited for interview for the leader of research post I had bid for some six months earlier. I reported that I had got a good hearing and had delivered a “content” paper on the myth of management and a “process” paper on research methodology. I had subsequently withdrawn my bid, appreciating the hearing but unconvinced that I could secure the radical consulting role I sought.

I calmly described myself as having been as close as I can imagine to a nervous breakdown at the beginning of June.

I reported that I had managed to take some time off to write my novel, three days out of a projected week, and that I was reminded by the experience that this is what I feel myself called to do.

While I was away, I said, the management team or focalisers at ACL had met and in my absence the Managing Director had named me as a 'performance problem' - a reference to my 'failure' to deliver target revenue earning days.

I had returned to much personal support and found myself bothered by the way the statement had been made in my absence but otherwise agreeing with it. I reckoned that my responsibility as a “manager” was to put myself under notice - and was preparing for a

meeting the following week with my peer accountability pair (the system of peer accountability we had established under 'my' constitutional arrangements) when I would suggest that I take a pay cut, step down from a position of responsibility, and give notice of my intention to seek an independent, associate role.

I hoped to be able to negotiate a contract based on an expectation of performing a mixture of consulting and research activities along with some elements of internal development, especially for newly recruited consultants.

I referred to my initial questions, in the first supervision group, about anger and inclusion and noted that I have taken action myself, decided that retreat is the appropriate action, to step to the edge from outside rather than within.

I went on to discuss how the 'us' in my research process might be other disillusioned downshifters!

(As though my carefully formulated topic about the myth of management remained alive!)

And then, at the end, I slipped in a statement about the extent to which I had become particularly exercised by the presentational in Heron's extended epistemology – about how to write a coherent but also congruent account. We discussed using photos and maps and the work of Foucault and others.

(I realise, from this reflexive vantage point, how clearly my account, or accounting to my supervision group, was now firmly about the progression of my life and the way the inquiry seems to be following it. My "practice" as consultant and leader was collapsing as earlier in my period of raw search my marriage had done – it was as though I was de-constructing my long held world, characterised by security and responsibility.)

(There is just that one line reference to being close to the edge of a nervous breakdown. In fact there had been two days in the week of my novel writing that I had 'lost.' It was as though a second seismic shift had taken place in my world view, in my personal paradigm. But at that stage, my inner resources were directed towards the practical, if extreme, actions I had reported, to demote and then dismiss myself from the consultancy. It took a further year, to June 1997, for that edge of collapse to re-appear. On that occasion I 'lost' most of a month, incapable of work and relying on the close attention and support of Donna and my friend Hugh Pidgeon to maintain any kind of sense of self-worth. When I speak or write about learning in the sense of a new perspective, or Learning

Ill in the Batesonian sense, and my role as provocative teacher, I now have a much more acute ear, a compassionate ear, for the implications).

Session 8 – 30/9/96 - How to be passionate and unattached?

How to introduce the aesthetic, the way of beauty, without being offensive, precious and exploitative?

These were the questions which emerged out of a supervision group conversation with a very different tone and pace to it, compared to the previous tapes I had been listening to. I was quieter, more tentative and thoughtful, more engaging, less making a report or presentation, more engaged in a musing.

I started with the familiar, by now, litany, the framing of me/us/them – recognising that ‘I’ remained central to a series of concentric rings. My process of struggle through the year - research or consultancy at Ashridge, community versus cash, do I stay at all?, on the edge from inside or outside - I claimed as central to my inquiry.

I continued to discuss an ‘us’, now apparently a group of four within the consultancy who continued to be concerned with questions of purpose. We had invited Peter Garrett to lead a dialogue on this topic. I discussed, we discussed, issues of transparency, of irreconcilable differences or otherwise, of levels of self-awareness.

And I said I was really interested, especially, in the presentational, in introducing the aesthetic into my practice, as one of the reasons I held on to the notional title of myth in/of management was to keep myth in there, the notion of story.

In relation to the outer circle, the ‘them’, I launched into a quietly passionate speech about the talk and writing of different paradigms, in management in particular, lists of apparent dichotomies between the masculine and feminine, for instance, representing competition and co-operation, planning and emergence, and so on. That typically one “side” was viewed as “bad” and “old”, castigated as Newtonian, the other side as “good” and “new.” Or in a more sophisticated version that we must honour and “hold” the both, AND is the truthful trick in a world of multiple realities.

But none of this, I argued, seemed to change anything. Folk talked, wrote, held to one position or other, but nothing changed.

And this was why I was now interested in how we talked, how we wrote – the presentational, for it seemed to me that there was a different quality of experience available in the aesthetic moment, that in-drawing of breath which seemed to touch a different place, a place of unknowing where explanation gave way to mystery.

(There is then, in my original set of notes, a long description of a kind of 'presentation' I made about the sense I was at that time making of the presentational in the sense of the aesthetic. It does not seem especially relevant now, in retrospect. But there is a note which interests me more from its tone than its content, particularly).

Judi quoted Charlene Spretnak to the effect “the intellect can point the yearning but can’t satisfy the need – only enacted practice can bring you to a state of grace.”

There was much about yearning and emptiness, lack of purpose, informing our discussion. And I ended the conversation expressing a sense of aspiration, of practising as some kind of magician, with the way of beauty as a touchstone in the everyday and “touching a dynamic root” – as the way of enabling movement.

(I include this passage because of its introduction of the notion of 'attentional phrases' as touch stone, or guiding qualities in the conduct of my 'life inquiry'.

This review of the first eight sessions of my supervision group conversations brings me, more or less, to the end of my first year of research. The next tape I listened to in this 'double reflexive' process is of the presentation and 'defence' of my Diploma transfer paper. I paused at this point in reviewing my research his-story for a reflection on the reflexive process, the unfolding of my research and the relation both had to the changing context of my life and practice).

I am reminded by this stage of my review that my practice continues to evolve – in a way I am no clearer now than I was then what my practice is – for it is many things, my way of being in the world. But the notion of teacher has, in some way, replaced that of being researcher.

It seems as though this particular way of telling the story, my research history, offers insights into the way different forms of knowing impact on one another, as well as on the changing nature of my inquiry. Indeed, there are at least three streams of reflexion at work, the nature of knowing and how to capture it, the content or focus of my inquiry as it shifts and takes new form, and the nature of my practice, too, is changing.

The apparently confident consultant and leader within ACL enters the story with some questions about transferring into a research role at Ashridge and leaves somewhat perplexed and disillusioned, his leadership role unappreciated, preparing to demote and dismiss himself. And other strands have crept in, it seems, a question about the role of teaching, the balance of advocacy with inquiry and how to be passionate but unattached are new questions of practice.

I believe that my subsequent practice as teacher and facilitator are informed by my experience of retreat, by my continuing belief in community, by my intuitive knowing about vulnerability and passion, my concern for advocacy and inquiry.

This is one way of presenting my learning, its mess and muddle and the curious quality in the tone, the unsaid – real stuff lurking in the underbrush, as it were, ready to be reported in even tones at the next encounter, whatever the actual experience might have been like – I choose to leave an unfinished sentence, a statement left hanging, ready for the review of my draft Diploma Transfer Paper)

Session 9 – Diploma Transfer Paper – 26/1/97

This was a 'formal' meeting of the supervision group at which I hoped that my supervisor and peers would judge the written work I had submitted as of sufficient quality to justify my continuation to the MPhil stage of the CARPP programme. In the sense of 'examination', then, this was an important stage in my research process.

But that phrase from my reflections of the previous session – 'real stuff lurking in the underbrush' – strikes a note in listening to this session. There is a discordant, shadowy quality about me at the time of my transfer. In practice I was about to leave Ashridge to go independent, a decision I had anticipated earlier in these conversations but which was now imminent.

And I realise, as I sit at my reflexive task, that I have a similar feeling of dislocation 'now' - nearly three years later. I am reminded of the extraordinary image 'Hope', by George Frederic Watts, that I am presently carrying around in my slide pack without ever really getting to grips with it, somehow. Perhaps I should include it here. It has a quality I liken to the work of William Blake. It could be a painting of a figure under water, shrouded in mystery, a creature who represents my 'shadow.' Or maybe it is the sense of binding I

associate with the image, of containing some potential beauty in an almost foetal position, part voluntary, part imposed.

I realise that I am finding it hard to concentrate on the session to which I am listening on tape, the historical moment. It started off pretty rough!

Let's start with the challenge, as the session started, from one of my peers.

At one level I am challenged about my writing, that it is sugary, sweet – that I lack a critical voice.

At another level I am challenged that this may be a true reflection of who I am – “nice clothes but with nothing of substance underneath,” is the phrase I hear.

I am challenged with dithering, speaking of moving on at one moment then stepping back from the edge, that I am neither dropping out nor shifting down, that I am decadent, enjoying the trappings of my privileged lifestyle.

I am, finally, challenged to explain myself better and to apply myself to a rigorous and systematic method.

(I hear a pretty comprehensive demolition job. And I know that at the time I heard it in two quite different parallel streams, one explaining the feedback as a reflection of the giver rather than of my work, the other finding truth in everything that was said.)

And I then hear the support.

At least I can hear it 'now', listening to the tape. I am not sure that I heard much of it 'then,' at the time of the meeting. But I have subsequently 'grown up,' or so I claim, and can hear more fully now.

(I am sure, now, that this is a patterned reflection - it is true of what I thought but it is not true of what I had learned! For at another, less conscious (in the sense of 'explained or storied to myself) I had heard the support. But not only had I heard the support, I had also noticed my own ability to 'hear' the challenge with different ears. I noticed the projection contained in the feedback and could, at a less conscious level, notice the projected or patterned quality in my own defensive process of 'not hearing'. But so strong is the pattern that it takes several rounds of reflexive revision to 'really' hear - and who is to say when 'really' occurs!)

That I write with elegance and flow, suspending the reader out of a critical voice.

That I mirror, in my personal progress, issues I raise at a more general level. That somehow I am noticing myself act in a way which reflects my wider concerns.

That I am touching, in my concern for the way we present our knowing, other ways out of the present cultural norm, that I am on to something.

I hear at the end of this session a certain quality of resolution in my voice – maybe defiance – that I intend to go on with my inquiry and my writing in a way that makes sense to me. But that I would like to find a way to include the critical edge, the rigorous analysis requested.

(I realise that I have been unable to sustain the past tense for this section of reported conversation. Indeed, the style of the reporting has changed – hasn't it? And something had changed. As I recalled at the time of the first reflexive hearing)

So, early in 1997 I did free myself from the constraints of employed status – I bid for independence, moved to Devon, despite the commitments of two mortgages to pay and two sons to support at University. Well, is that such a big deal? After some thirty two years of being securely employed, with a fundamental disposition towards the need for security and inclusion, I think it was a pretty big deal. I had been close to some kind of breakdown in June '96, my sense of myself as a responsible, competent person pretty much in tatters. I had substantially failed in my project to lead ACL as an experimental learning community, retreating in the face of commercial imperatives and my own failure to perform as a revenue generating consultant. I had acted, I believe, with considerable courage and grace in electing to step down from my responsibility, take a pay cut, effectively serve notice on myself to quit. Now all this is relative. I was not about to go out on the streets, to drop out to that extent for sure. I had continuing client commitments, the possibility of continuing earnings as an independent, a home and a wonderfully supportive partner. I felt well loved. Is this a man of substance taking charge of his life or a decadent dreamer?

I stood on the bridge I had constructed. Looking back I could see a world with which I was thoroughly disillusioned, a competitive, linear, mechanistic world of explanations. Ahead of me I could see a world more organic, mysterious, expressive, a world of beauty. This is one of those dichotomies I so distrusted – what was it like to hold the both, stay in the middle, could I add salt to the sugar?

In the curious way that life has of serving up lessons, as I reached these hopeful conclusions in my reflexive process I was invited, most graciously by Peter Reason, to join the gathering of eminent academics at Fetzer for supper and conversation. For a while, there, I thought I had made it.

As well as recording a series of choices I was making in my life and practice, these accounts have revealed a choice I was making about my research topic. Or, rather, they were revealing a rather slow and painful process by which I was allowing myself to research what I felt was my 'real' topic. I 'passed' the Diploma stage with a research topic I eventually re-named. No longer was I researching the "Myth of Management." Now I was engaged in an inquiry "Life leadership – crafting a personal account of learning to lead my life well." Which might be a bit long but feels much more accurate.)

(And I had learned a significant lesson about hearing differently. I had learned about cycles of reflexive practice offering a distanced possibility of hearing the separations of tone and content which suggest a shift in understanding. I have chosen, subsequently, to substitute 'revisionary reflection' in my writing methodology for the cycles of listening to tapes, although I have returned to significant moments of my wobbly process to pick up, again, that sense of separation which suggests that the 'hearing stage' is moving in some way).

SECTION 3

WHAT I KNOW

SECTION 3 - WHAT I KNOW

A DIALECTIC THOU: WHAT I KNOW

1st draft March 2001

2nd draft February 2002

3rd draft May 2002

Introduction.

In this section Robin moves on to the second 'leg' of his 'Bumpy Learning Wheel,' which is 'What I am Knowing.' To recap, his wheel consists of three 'legs':-

>Who I am becoming

>What I am knowing

>What I am doing

These three form some kind of related structure in which Robin's internal process of reflection gets turned into external forms of expression. In particular, as teacher, he has noticed that in order to teach with some assurance he needs to be confident of what he knows and how this knowing is reflected in his own being.

The previous section, which was about 'How I Learn,' is represented by Robin as the axis around which these three legs rotate. Learning is the central topic which somehow energises the three legs in a sequence which seems both iterative and progressive.

This section includes material which Robin has selected as particularly relevant to his learning through the aspect of his research he calls his scholarship. What He Knows is, in this respect, relevant to his practice as researcher rather than a comprehensive view of the knowing he has gained in his practice fields as teacher and writer.

Each chapter also represents, in a way, a 'learning lurch,' a significant turn of Robin's wheel of learning. As well, therefore, as the 'scholarship' content of each chapter, his selection is also based on the particular quality of 'learning' associated with each of the topic areas.

Selection of the Material.

Robin has appreciated a particular 'formal' setting for what he calls his scholarship. In much the same way as his practice as teacher, especially in the role of dissertation supervisor, taught him much about methodology, so his teaching practice on the Cranfield MBA has taught him much of What He now Knows.

Donna and Robin Ladkin taught an elective course for MBA students at Cranfield University Business School from 1997 to 1999, which was called "Leading into the New Millenium". The course ran over six half day modules and both Donna and Robin wrote essays to be included in the 'Case Pack' for each module as introductory reading. Robin's three essays were:-

- > The Philosophic Perspective
- > The Aesthetic Perspective
- > The Scientific Perspective.

He has chosen to include his essay on **The Aesthetic Perspective** in the next section as an example of his practice. This choice is determined by his view that this essay represents an argument which he particularly 'owns' and is therefore representative of his outer, expressive arc.

His choice of topics in this section is based rather more on what he considers are fundamental 'pillars' or 'foundations' emanating from his scholarship. They are, in this sense, more interior. The topics included here are much chewed over and digested, their origins difficult to trace through previous drafts and journal entries.

He has chosen to include as his first chapter in this Section his **Reflections on Philosophy**, a revised version of The Philosophical Perspective. The 'knowing' contained in this revised draft is essentially related to the ontological and epistemological basis for his methodology.

The material contained in this Reflection is not especially original. Its value to Robin is an appreciation for the 'framing' that a generative post-modern perspective has given to his present world view.

Robin has chosen not to include his knowing reflected in **The Scientific Perspective**. He continues to be particularly interested in the scientific debate around issues of Mind, Consciousness and Brain, but feels that his knowing in this field is neither especially original nor particularly pertinent to the process of his learning, as represented in his thesis. He certainly has a perspective, or point of view, which was much rehearsed on the Cranfield course and continues to inform his teaching practice on

AMOC. The chapter Teaching Practice, which appears in the next Section, refers to some aspects of his perspective.

The two succeeding chapters included in this Section are revisions of papers he wrote for the PhD transfer stage of his research process. The first is on the topic of **The Imagination**. As the Dialectic Thou which introduces that chapter will attest, Robin sees his appreciation for the quality of Imagination as central to his work as teacher and writer, certainly. But it is also central to his world view as a compassionate and responsible human. In a way Robin's advocacy of the Aesthetic Perspective, included in section 4, is the outer expression of his inner appreciation for the Imagination.

The other PhD transfer piece is **On Storytelling**. This aspect of Robin's knowing features strongly in his practice, especially as teacher on the AMOC programme. This is another 'formal' setting for his advocacy in which he encourages his students to adopt expressive means of communication in their written assignments and in their practice as consultants. Story telling also represents an important stream of his presentational method in his thesis for, of course, he is telling a story and asking you to judge its quality by the sense it makes for you.

Much of Robin's concern for presentation stems from his wish, as an emergent writer, to craft a form in which the oral quality of the ancient art of story telling can be captured in a written form.

As well as discussing the significance of Story telling as form, this chapter introduces a second major 'story,' or 'epiphany, which he has called "**The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.**" This is Robin's story of meeting Donna and seeing the sun rise. He suggested, in his first autobiographical Section, that these events marked the transition from his raw-searching into his re-searching phase as well as a definitive moment of choice in the way he leads his life.

This Section ends with the **Power of Image**, another learning which has been reflected in Robin's teaching practice and in his presentation of this thesis. This review introduces the second in a sequence of three images intended to represent Robin's sense of 'growing up' through his research process. The first was "The Apprentice Alchemist" with which he concluded section 1. The second image, a painting by Cecil Collins of his wife and himself seated at the window of their cottage overlooking the river Dart just up-stream from Dartington, is a representation Robin has chosen to

signify a maturing stage in his process of 'growing up' based on a degree of assurance for What He Knows.

A Note on 'Scholarship'.

The process by which the material in this Section has been generated is what Robin calls his scholarship. He has learned to appreciate his own learning process in this form of knowing, which might be characterised as propositional, which has a sequence something like:-

- Reading – an excited recognition of some previously unexplained pre-knowing, often inspired by a 'teacher.'
- Talking – maybe in a 'practice' role as teacher, consultant, coach – or in more general settings as colleague, friend, husband, father. Usually all of these, in some way or another, testing out the sound of the learning.
- Writing – 'informally' in the sense of journal writing and 'formally' in the medium of this thesis document or essays in the Cranfield Case Pack and AMOC documentation.
- Reading – again, usually inspired by a new level of understanding as the talking and writing reveals a more grounded sense of the material.
- Teaching – a clearer setting of presentation and discussion in which Robin professes to 'know.' Except, of course, that a part of Robin's learning is the tenuous quality of knowing.
- Revising - or writing again - and again - the process which takes me back into reading my own thoughts at a more distanced, critical level.

Writing and Teaching, the expressive re-presentational outputs of his scholarship, have led Robin to a curious understanding of the sufficiency of his knowing. He knows that he needs to 'know enough' to get himself started and to offer some kind of sufficiency of content in these practices. But he knows that he will never know more than a tiny proportion of what he could know. And he knows that there is much unknown. And he has learned to appreciate that his knowing this is an important quality he offers, especially as teacher. For he is continually curious which means that he can practise with a genuine sense of inquiry.

A DIALECTIC THOU - A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

1st draft May 2002

Introduction.

Robin's Philosophical Reflection forms an underpinning to his thesis and the way he now approaches his life choices. The notion that 'we choose how to think' is the liberating thought which led him on the path between Hope and Despair, as described in the Introductory Section. A re-generative view of postmodernism is the basis for his methodology in his thesis and for his practice as teacher.

One of Robin's principal concerns, as he considered the idea of pursuing a research degree, was the relatively narrow base of his previous education, in particular in the philosophical field. The pursuit of scholarship, as represented by this Section, was one of the principal attractions of a formal process of study. The writing and revision of this chapter has engendered both of these responses - concern that he will never learn enough and excitement at the illuminations the field has offered. This chapter is a reflection by Robin of a limited learning, therefore, but an influential learning.

The Responsibility of Constructing a WorldView.

Robin's thesis demonstrates a parallel process of his increasing his awareness in the inner dimension while also clarifying his understanding of the cosmic context in which he makes his life choices. The liberation of his philosophical understanding is that the world that he views is determined, or constructed, in large measure by the perspectives from which he chooses to see and make sense.

Robin describes this liberation as a responsibility, also - encapsulated in his attentional phrase compassionate responsibility. Responsibility, in these terms, clearly includes an awareness of the perspectives he chooses to adopt and a recognition of their partiality.

In pursuing a statement of his ontology Robin wrestles with the extent of the constructionist view he 'believes'. In recognising the limitations of a view of the world composed of 'objective reality', Robin also retreats from a world composed of nothing but interpretation. He recognises that his 'position' in a postmodern conception is a matter of

choice and belief, and appreciates the significance of this position in the way he has conducted his research and chooses to lead his life.

Integrity and Compassion.

Much of the revision that this chapter has been subjected to has been in the process of converting it from an essay for the Cranfield Case-Pack into a 'justification' for Robin's emergent research methodology. The guiding criterion for this justification has been Robin's interest, derived from his practice as supervisor for AMOC dissertations, in Integrity.

Robin's re-presentation of his philosophical reflections pursues this notion of integrity of method beyond the scope of research methodology and into his process for making life choices. In this regard integrity meets compassion in a dance lightened by irony.

Robin's melancholic, Saturnine tendency, as revealed in his autobiographical section, can lead him to despair. This despair is 'of the world' but also inner directed. One of the significant achievements of Robin's period of research has been for him to apply the notion of compassion towards himself, to lighten the heavy load of responsibility with the ironic touch of Mercury. His Philosophical Reflection re-presents something of this compassionate irony in the image he increasingly carries of himself, to be more fully discussed in the Epilogue, as Gardener, an image on a domestic scale.

Robin's hope is that if he can hold himself in this nurturing image, he may practise with compassion and lead his life with compassion as well as responsibility.

CHAPTER 4

A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

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4th draft February 2002

5th draft May 2002

Introduction.

As the Dialectic Thou makes clear this chapter derives from two sources - the essay I wrote for the Cranfield Case Pack and the ontological justification for my emergent methodology previously included in the prior Section.

My methodological justification was on the basis of the criterion I call **integrity**, which I attempted to describe in the Practical Academy. This account of my developing philosophical understanding assumes that a critical aspect of integrity is the congruence of my chosen methodology with the world view, or ontology, that I am upholding and the way I notice I am learning, my epistemology.

In terms of the opportunity afforded by writing essays for the Cranfield Case pack, I was encouraged into the process of scholarship described in the Dialectic Thou to this Section. I had been inspired, in my entry to the field of philosophy, by Richard Tarnas's great (in my view) work, "Passion of the Western Mind," (Tarnas, 1991). To me this is an example of writing as a craft combining the explanatory with the expressive in a passionate argument.

Tarnas advocates a thorough re-appraisal of our present mindset by presenting his historical account in such a way as to suggest that we are, indeed, at the kind of turning point I initially envisaged as I contemplated undertaking a PhD on a narrow boat on the Oxford Canal. (as narrated in Section 1)

I have attempted, in this reflection, to capture the essence of my philosophical 'position' by extracting passages from the essay I wrote, "The Philosophical Perspective", for the Case Pack which accompanied the course Donna Ladkin and I taught at Cranfield Business School, "Leading for the New Millennium."

(But once again I have had to recognise the powerful reflexive effect of revision. What started out as an intent to 'cut and paste' my previous draft has developed into a considerable exercise involving re-reading extracts from my journals, piling books back onto my desk for the references my journal entries suggest, and re-writing many passages to try and convey a deeper understanding. What I now find interesting is that the material I previously included contained a logic which I struggled to articulate. I hope I have now slimmed down the material to a point where this logical progression becomes apparent, without denying my continuing concern for the limitations of my scholarship).

A Scholarly Inquiry into my Philosophical Perspective.

The particular 'moment' in the history of Western thought that I want to focus on in this brief summary pivots around the figures of Kant and Nietzsche. In a curious way I feel that these two figures stand as guardians to the bridge between hope and despair that forms a central image for my thesis. And it is not that Kant represents hope and Nietzsche despair, or the converse, but that rather between them they provide for that quality of integration I have learned to see the bridge representing.

In a way my reading of their contributions to the philosophical narrative has been mirrored in my despair at the present 'scientific' paradigm as represented in our materialist culture, the gleanings of hope in seeing this as only one of a number of possible 'truths,' and a re-naisance of a more connected, Romantic, way of seeing myself in my world.

There are two shifts in perspective at work here:

- a 'post-modern' liberation into a world of multiple truths, and
- a generative interpretation of post-modernism for which I choose the label 'romantic.'

Tarnas describes the quality of Kant's contribution as 'the Copernican revolution in philosophy.' (Tarnas 1991: p. 346) Kant saw a necessary recognition of the limits of human reason, a recognition that would paradoxically open up a larger truth to man.

I recognised in Kant's distinction between 'phenomena' – objects as experienced – and 'noumena' – things in themselves – an explanation of my own experience of the world. There is the possibility of objective knowledge, he suggests, in that certain things must be true of objects of experience in order for them to be experienced. But his other category of

noumena suggests that this is a world of appearances, not of things as they are in themselves.

Bryan Magee, in his delightfully autobiographical account of philosophy "Confessions of a Philosopher", (Magee 1997) reckons that *"the greatest single achievement in philosophy (is) Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal. It embodied a fundamentally new, indeed revolutionary conception of how the limits of intelligibility were to be understood."* (ibid: p. 200).

And he describes his journey into academic philosophy, capturing my sense, too, of being a 'natural' Kantian. *"Growing to adulthood as I did, absorbed by a sense of wonder about the world, and engrossed in some of the seemingly insoluble problems it presented – especially problems connected with time, space, our perception of physical objects and their intrinsic nature - - - the discovery was lying in wait for me that I had grown up a natural Kantian, beginning with the antinomies of time and space and going on to the unconceptualizability of things as they are in themselves independently of our modes of experience. - - - I discovered to my astonishment that I had been immersed in philosophical problems all my life."* (ibid: pp. 15-16)

My life experience is different in that it took me much longer to discover that my scholarly search would lead me to the same territory. Philosophy, Magee subsequently discovers, despite a frustrating period of academic study which seemed to focus on insignificant detail rather than the large, metaphysical questions which continued to excite him, *"stands close to great art among the most valuable and important of human concerns, and for a similar reason: both are truth-seeking activities pursued at the deepest level that human beings are capable of penetrating to. Both are trying to see into the ultimate nature of things, the ultimate mystery of existence; and if they fail it is only at the limits of human understanding that they fail. As Schopenhauer put it, the philosopher is doing in abstraction what the artist is doing in concreto. The philosopher has no recourse but to articulate his findings in concepts, and it may be that from the ineluctable generality of concepts it follows that philosophy cannot bite as deep as art can, but at the same time there are things that it can do that art cannot. When Iris Murdoch said, 'For better and worse art goes deeper than philosophy,' she was right to imply that there are some respects in which philosophy surpasses art, and also right to imply that it comes short of it overall."* (ibid: p. 23).

Here, I thought, was confirmation of my intuitive belief that artistic process and form has the possibility of illuminating aspects of knowing which even the most erudite of explanations cannot fathom.

But Magee excited me well beyond these initial, intellectual notions. Half way through his story he tells of his mid-life crisis. At the age of forty, or thereabouts, he became terrified of his own mortality. And as a consequence, he describes the process by which *“my values went through sea changes. Everything was limited to this life and this world came to appear insignificant. Only what might possibly point beyond them, or have its basis outside them – beauty, art, sex, morality, integrity, metaphysical understanding – could even possibly be worth anything. Of course this is related to what philosophy in the Kant-Schopenhauer – early-Wittgenstein tradition is saying, but when it hits me in this direct, overwhelming way it was not a theoretical conclusion but something felt, lived, acted on. Only in intimate relationships, and in the privacy of one’s own self, and experiences of art, and attempts to understand things could there be any value.”* (ibid: p. 266)

Once again my experience differed from Magee’s in substance – I was curiously liberated by the thought of my own mortality rather than terrified – but the quality of the learning feels the same. I follow Magee’s path into the thoughts of Nietzsche inspired by a sense of fellow feeling as well as intellectual curiosity. He describes, as a consequence of his fundamental shift in values, a consequent shift in his attitude to thought systems and a new responsiveness to ‘humanist existentialism.’ He enumerates three particular attractions:

- The most important questions in philosophy concern not knowledge but existence. And from this perspective the important questions about knowledge relate to existence. And if we ask these questions do we discover that some questions are answerable and others are not.
- In pursuing this line of questioning, if I want to investigate the nature of existence as such it would seem that the most promising way to start, the way for which I am most fully equipped, is investigation into the nature of my own existence.
- *“The third thing that attracted me about the tradition of humanistic existentialism is that my involvement with it led me back to its fountainhead in the work of Nietzsche. (For) just as Kant had succeeded in identifying and*

posing the fundamental problem of experience in an unprecedentedly challenging way, so Nietzsche did something similar with regard to morality and values.”

(ibid: pp. 274-275)

Towards what proved to be the end of his working life Nietzsche planned and began work on a four-part book that was to be the summation of his thought, to be called “The Revaluation of All Values.” But in January 1889 he collapsed into total madness and the book was never written.

Kant’s separation of the phenomenal from the noumenal liberated me in the sense that I now realise I have a choice of how I think, and offered me a framework for the different forms of knowing I experience. I could now suggest that my notion of ‘poetic wisdom’ is located in the noumenal arena.

Tarnas alerted me to Nietzsche’s development of Kant’s essential insight in his construction of ‘knowing.’ Nietzsche is the author of a radical perspectivism *“in which there exists a plurality of perspectives through which the world can be interpreted, and there is no authoritative independent criterion according to which one system can be determined to be more valid than others.”* (Tarnas 1991: p. 370.) I now live in a post-modern world of multiple realities.

And Nietzsche also presents me with the second shift in perspective my Philosophical Reflection considers. This is the shift to a generative form of post-modernism. Nietzsche encourages me to realise that I have a choice in my values. Magee led me to an **understanding** of Nietzsche’s contribution to morality.

Nietzsche’s contribution as I understand it is that as the Enlightenment ushered in a period in which there is no longer a transcendental basis for morality and values, human beings, socially and over time, have to decide what they should be, accepting full responsibility for them as their creation.

And, Nietzsche, it seems, valued life. *“He believed that life itself was the touchstone of true values – the self-assertive reality of something or someone spontaneously being itself.”* (Magee 1997: p. 276.)

If Magee’s contribution was to my understanding, Tarnas’s was to excite my sense of a deeper knowing. He tapped into my pre-knowing. In a passage I wrote into my journal at a moment of such knowing, he suggests:

“Nietzsche set forth the paradigmatic Romantic position regarding the relation of will to truth and knowledge. He accepted that the rational intellect could not

achieve objective truth; nor could any perspective ever be independent of interpretation of some sort. But if the world was radically indeterministic, it could be shaped by a heroic act of will to affirm life and bring forth its triumphant fulfilment: The highest truth. Nietzsche prophesied that this was being born within man through the self-creating power of the will. All of man's striving for knowledge and power would fulfil itself in a new being who would incarnate the living meaning of the universe. But to achieve this birth, man would have to grow beyond himself so fundamentally that his present limited self would be destroyed: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal - - - Man is something that must be overcome." For man was a way to new dawns and new horizons far beyond the compass of the present age. And the birth of this new being was not a life-impoverishing otherworldly fantasy to be believed by ecclesiastical decree, but was a vivid, tangible reality to be created, here and now, through the heroic self-overcoming of the great individual. Such an individual had to transform life into a work of art, within which he could forge his character, embrace his fate, and recreate himself as heroic protagonist of the world epic. He had to invent himself anew, imagine himself into being. He had to will into existence a fictive drama into which he could enter and live, imposing a redemptive order on the chaos of a meaningless universe without God. Then the God who had long been projected to the beyond could be born within the human soul. Then man could dance godlike in the eternal flux, free of all foundations and all bounds, beyond every metaphysical constraint. Truth was not something one proved or disproved; it was something one created. In Nietzsche, as in Romanticism generally, the philosopher became poet; a world conception was judged not in terms of abstract rationality or factual verification, but as an expression of courage, beauty and imaginative power."

(Tarnas 1991: p. 370-1)

And so I arrived at the postmodern junction. I have a choice, it seems to me, between the extreme scepticism of post-modern deconstruction or the redemptive belief in the power of man's will and imagination. I choose the latter and like to name my position 'Romantic', although Charlene Spretnak, in her optimistic account "The Resurgence of the Real," (Spretnak, 1997) devotes a chapter under the heading "Don't Call It Romanticism."

But for me she captures the essential message of a post-modern, participative worldview in considering the Romantic argument prevailing at the turn of the 19th century. It still feels entirely relevant two centuries later:

"The Romantics opposed neither science nor rational thought. What they vociferously objected to was the unwarranted extension of principles applicable in Newtonian physics to our entire understanding of the nature of being. They struggled against the absorption of all reality into the scientistic abstractions of the "single vision," as Blake called the mechanistic world view, in Los the Terrible:

May God us keep

From single vision, and Newton's sleep!

They rejected instrumental "reason" that was reduced to systems of abstraction, routine, and the denial of all relationships that could not be measured empirically: Reason that is disengaged and tightly regulated would starve other human faculties, they believed. Foremost, the Romantics asserted – sometimes with dramatic expressions of despair – that the modern worldview amounted to a self-destructive denial of our cosmological embeddedness, our dynamic participation in the sacred whole." (ibid: p. 136)

It seems to me that, despite the extraordinary transformations in science which have taken Newton's mechanistic view into a quantum universe based on probability, the same concerns for the privileging of the scientistic programme remain as crucial as ever.

I noticed the choice opened up by the post-modern turn as a liberation – 'I can choose how I think.' But I also notice that the subsequent, generative turn towards a new form of romanticism suggests that I have a responsibility – 'I must choose how I think, and recognise the values and moral consequences of that choice.' As Tarnas puts it, *"the human challenge is to engage that world view or set of perspectives which brings forth the most valuable life enhancing consequences."* (Tarnas 1991: p. 406)

(It is at this point in my revision process that I notice the logical progression of my previous draft. I have arrived at a point about choice. This is the issue of integrity I have noticed as an assessor, reading other people's accounts of their inquiries. "Does the integrity of the inquiry hold open choice?" But it is deeply implicated in my own inquiry. I am choosing, by stepping through Hope and Despair, to live according to a 'life enhancing perspective').

I now notice in pursuing my own inquiry further that I have arrived at what feels like a crucial moment. My philosophical reflection has pointed up my belief that in a generative, post-modern world view I have to choose the moral basis upon which I choose to live my life. This notion is contained in the title to my thesis, "learning to live my life well." How do I decide? And this question takes me into a further loop of my philosophical reflection, which is into the axiological domain, the theory of value.

An axiological note.

I need guidance. I have learned to appreciate the value of my attentional phrases, those 'touch stones' I turn to for reflexive challenge. But each one contains a paradox, a dialectic dilemma. So, how to choose? In a constructionist world I have to create my own basis for choosing - there is no scale nor creed to guide me. In my earlier draft of this chapter I noticed:

"One of the great delights of this process of re-search has been the gradual unfolding of elements of my view of the world that I previously hardly dared notice or make explicit. This is one great benefit of having to write a significant piece, which is to encourage that unfolding. I have come to realise that I have a view of the world which contains several different levels of 'reality.'"

As I now reflect further in my revision and re-ordering of that earlier material I notice, once again, a bridge metaphor at work linking two quite different aspects of my world view. One way of naming these would be to maintain the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal.

I think much of the anger and despair I felt, especially during my raw-searching phase, was related to the privileging I noticed in our present Western culture of the phenomenal and its explanation and exploitation through science. As Wendell Berry puts it: *"the danger is that we can give up on life by presuming to "understand" it – that is by reducing it to the terms of our understanding and by treating it as predictable or mechanical."* (Berry 2000: p. 6)

I was helped out of this despairing view of science by a clarification of categories by Chomsky. I wrote a passage about this for my MPhil transfer paper which maintains a quality of 'truth' for me:

Chomsky divides scientific questions into problems, which are at least potentially answerable, and mysteries, which are not. Before the seventeenth century, when

science did not really exist in the modern sense, almost all questions appeared to be mysteries. Then Newton, Descartes and others began posing questions and solving them with the methods that spawned modern science. Some of these investigations have led to spectacular progress, but many others have proved fruitless. Scientists have made absolutely no progress, for example, investigating such issues as consciousness and free will. “We don’t even have bad ideas,” in Chomsky’s view.

All animals, in his view, have cognitive abilities shaped by their evolutionary histories. A rat, for example, may learn to navigate a maze that requires it to turn left at every second fork but not one that requires it to turn left at every fork corresponding to a prime number. If one believes that humans are animals – then we, too, are subject to these biological constraints. Our language capacity allows us to formulate questions and resolve them in ways that rats cannot, but ultimately we, too, face mysteries as absolute as that faced by the rat in a prime-number maze. We are limited in our ability to ask questions as well. Chomsky thus rejects the possibility that physicists or other scientists could attain a theory of everything; at best, physicists can only create a “theory of what they know how to formulate.”

In a reference I noted from his 1988 book, “Language and Problems of Knowledge,” which, I suppose is more epistemological than ontological, Chomsky suggested that our verbal creativity may prove more fruitful than our scientific skills for addressing many questions about human nature. *“It is quite possible – overwhelmingly probable, one might guess – that we will always learn more about human life and human personality from novels than from scientific psychology,”* he wrote. *“The science-forming capacity is only one facet of our mental endowment. We use it where we can but are not restricted to it, fortunately.”*

I believe in a world of physical reality but I believe that we have a limited capacity for ‘knowing’ it. I believe that this realisation, of our limited cognitive capacity, is as important as our appreciation that we are but one of many interconnected species – we have no special claim for dominion.

Not only do I believe in a world of physical reality I delight in it. And this delight extends to our inventive capacity for sharing in and utilising nature’s gifts. In that same passage I noted this about my ‘practical philosophy’:

One of these is a 'concrete' sense of an objective world 'out there' which I can see, touch, smell, walk around and in amongst. I retain a delight for the design of the world I experience in nature and for much of the history of man's invention, turning nature's gifts to good account. When I work a lock gate, gently displacing tons of water, or watch a water wheel turn a grinding stone, or operate a pump, or watch my sail set to catch the wind, I am conscious of our ability to appreciate nature's gifts and our own capacity for invention and the crafting of devices to enhance our lives. I have a sense, too, that we began to overreach this benign capacity as we started to exploit the earth's resources to drive massive engines and as our new technologies have become opaque – who can now look into the workings of a mobile phone and trace the connections which convert my voice into digital blobs. As we have lost sight of the workings of our inventions, so have we lost sight of the damage that they can do.

I suppose that as well as being a Romantic I am also a neo-Luddite! But the point I am making here is that I have learned to re-appreciate the phenomenal world of physical reality, and to distinguish the limits of our scientific capacity and the moral imperatives which need to be asserted, in my view, to limit the danger Berry identifies, the danger that we can give up on life.

Nietzsche's call for a new basis of morality and values was predicated on an appreciation for life. Berry also suggests that: *"We need a new Emancipation Proclamation, not for a specific race or species, but for life itself – and that, I believe, is precisely what Edgar (in Shakespeare's tragedy of King Lear) urges upon his once presumptuous and now desperate father:*

"Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again."

(Berry 2000: p. 9)

Later, under the guidance of his son, Gloucester prays:

*"You ever gentle gods, take my breath from me;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please."*

In which he renounces control over his life. He has given up his life as an understood possession, and has taken it back as miracle and mystery.

I sense that the guidance I seek is contained in something like this transaction - a recognition that my life is but an accident of probability and yet it is also a mysterious miracle, a gift to be treated with compassionate responsibility. Increasingly I turn to Nature for guidance, for the mysterious miracle of life is all around me if only I care to look. In this axiological note I refer to gardening as my guidance:

As I have often discussed with Donna, I feel I have the potential to feel genuinely 'at one' with nature, intimately bound up and connected with other creatures in a natural democracy. But I also find myself feeling responsible, in some way, as a member of the desecrating human species, for the power we exert over nature. We have done what we have done and now face the consequences. We certainly need to re-learn our humility in the face of nature's mysteries, but a sense of responsible stewardship seems appropriate, too.

I am reminded of my journal notes back in early 1998 as I was reading "Second Nature", by Michael Pollan, ostensibly a gardening book, one of the Bloomsbury Gardening Classics. Pollan learns to garden and, in doing so confronts the question *"what was the right approach to pests in the garden? - - - I was beginning now to see that these questions quickly led to larger ones about how we choose to confront the natural landscape. Domination or acquiescence? As developers or naturalists? - - - The trick, I realize now, is somehow to find a middle ground between these two positions. And that is what a garden is, or should be, a place that admits of both nature and human habitation. But it is not, as I had imagined, a harmonious compromise between the two, nor is it stable."* (Pollan 1996: pp. 53-54)

Pollan goes on to explore the ramifications of organic gardening and re-discovers "green fingers", an intuitive 'going with the grain and flow,' which is part of our 'natural' heritage.

I like the gardening analogy. At much the same time I was reading "The Song of the Dodo," a remarkable investigation into "Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions", by David Quammen. It is a fine and despairing account of "ecosystem decay." But somewhere still, in a marriage of scientific and common sense, lies the possibility of conserving our diverse ecosystem – but this is, in my terms, gardening – a properly humble, responsible, dedicated attempt at reversing the damage we are doing, not dominion but stewardship, from within rather than from without.

I present my ‘practical philosophy,’ the bridge between the phenomenal and the noumenal, as a neo-Luddite organic gardener. I will return to this self-image in the final chapter, Ithaka, (chapter 12. For now I want to cross into the noumenal territory. If my outer awareness was fuelled by a feeling of despair at the plight of the world in the face of man’s scientifically led suicide (to maintain the King Lear metaphor), then my inner awareness has focused on re-visiting, in a more considered way, the insights of my period of raw-search. In considering the development of my axiological ‘position’ I start by recognising that:

much of the fracture that occurred during the period of raw-search I wrote of in the first section, which I have been subsequently refining, has been in the realms of soul and spirit. These are the inner arenas that this thesis tends to focus on.

I distinguish, at this final revising stage of my thesis, between the soul and the spirit. I tend to see these as inhabiting separate but related domains of the noumenal arena. As I noticed in my earlier draft of this section I seem to feel relatively at ease in the domain of soul, which is for me connects body with spirit. But the spiritual realm continues to hold a powerful charge for change, it feels. I explain it this way:

I have come to ‘know’ of a psychic world through experience as well as appreciation of the traditional wisdom that informs so much of my reading. I have a file of correspondence with Geoffrey Cornelius, astrologer, author of “The Moment of Astrology – Origins in Divination.” With him I have practised a particular form of divination, horary astrology, which speaks to me of a wisdom beyond our ken. In this way, and referring to rune stones, I draw on an intermediate world, a world of daemons and archetypal energies, known to and in connection with my far ancestors. As Brian Bates has suggested in his researches into the indigenous peoples in ancient Europe as recorded in “The Wisdom of the Wyrd,” my ancestors appreciated a force which underlies all life. I believe that this is what Nietzsche may have been re-claiming. I feel this force and see it, hear it, particularly at those moments of the aesthetic gasp, the in-drawn breath of life in contact, of which I write more fully in the section on the aesthetic perspective. Indeed, the epistemological equivalent of this level of my knowing is the aesthetic, the sense appreciation which goes beyond the here and now, into a time realm more infinite. Somehow I have learned to feel comfortable in this realm. I am at home with my daemons. I feel less so in the world of spirit. This is for me an awe-full world, a

world ineffable. There are occasions I have been struck dumb. I refer to one such at Findhorn in section 1.

A Sense for the Spiritual.

Inevitably this discussion of the values which guide my life choices turns to the spiritual domain. I intend in this reflection on my philosophical perspective to maintain a 'scholarly' approach, i.e. refer to the learning which has informed me through the scholarly aspect of my research.

I have been particularly struck by "Creation Spirituality" as written about by Mathew Fox (see references). Creation Spirituality, it seems to me, re-awakens a mystical quality in Christian religion in which St. Francis of Assisi, amongst others, was key. I feel the connection between this mystical tradition and the generative sense of human connection with nature which is a key aspect of my developing 'position.'

Warwick Fox points up the crucial division which occurred in Christianity in his book "Toward a Transpersonal Ecology", in which he traces the philosophical dimension of what we now call "deep" ecology. He reviews two early contributions to the field in his chapter "Moving Away from Human-Centredness", which is an argument for a non-anthropocentric philosophy. The first reference is to Rachel Carlson and her ground breaking work "Silent Spring." He notes that Carlson's book, although primarily concerned with the biological damage we are doing to ourselves, is also an indictment of our arrogant conception of our place in the larger scheme of things. For Carlson, our ecological thoughtlessness was matched only by our lack of philosophical maturity. In the last paragraph of her book, indeed, Carlson concluded that *"the 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man."* (Carlson as quoted in Fox 1995: p.5)

What of religion? Well, the second reference Fox turns to is the paper by the medieval historian Lynn White, Jr., presented to a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science held in December 1966, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis": *"especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen"* and that, accordingly, *"Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt"* for the ecological problems that have attended the *"Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature."* White

was implying a distinction between the Christian tradition that developed in the Latin West and that which developed in the Greek East. As White explained in his paper, Western Christianity developed in the direction of seeking to “*understand God’s mind by discovering how his creation operates,*” whereas Eastern Christianity continued to conceive of nature “*primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men: the ant is a sermon to sluggards, rising flames are the symbol of the souls’ aspiration.*” In concluding his analysis, White urged that the solution to our ecological problems lay not in the abandonment of religion per se, but rather in the abandonment of anthropocentrism: “*What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one . We shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our destiny.*” (White, as quoted in Fox 1995: p.6)

In White’s view, the remedy for our ecological problems lay in the direction of the alternative Christian view of the human-nonhuman relationship provided by St. Francis of Assisi: “*St. Francis proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man’s relation to it: He tried to substitute the idea of equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man’s limitless rule of creation.*” St. Francis’s attempt “*to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God’s creatures*” makes him, for White, “*the greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history.*” Accordingly, White concluded his analysis by proposing St. Francis as “*a patron saint for ecologists.*” (ibid: p. 7)

I am persuaded of this difference and attracted to the mystical quality in St. Francis. I am persuaded, too, of the non-anthropomorphic perspective, at least intellectually.

A Conclusion.

How to conclude?

I look, once again, through the pages of previous drafts, now separated into a neat pile of material which has been re-used and can be filed away and a more scattered 'discard' pile. There are gems here, but somehow they have not found their way into the logical narrative flow that I have been trying to construct. But one of my guiding convictions is that life does not flow according to a neat logic; it lurches and bumps, twists and turns, slows down and speeds up like the rivers flowing off Dartmoor I love to include in my contemplative walks.

So I choose to end with a little montage - a quotation from one of my most important source books, that of Richard Tarnas; a short extract from my own novel in draft, "Ham Stone", and a reflective note from an earlier revision. That will do.

Richard Tarnas writes:

"Each great epochal transformation in the history of the Western mind appears to have been initiated by a kind of archetypal sacrifice. As if to consecrate the birth of a fundamental new cultural vision, in each case a symbolically resonant trial and martyrdom of some sort was suffered by its central prophet: thus the trial and execution of Socrates at the birth of the classical Greek mind, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus at the birth of Christianity, and the trial and condemnation of Galileo at the birth of modern science. By all accounts the central prophet of the postmodern mind was Friedrich Nietzsche, with his radical perspectivism, his sovereign critical sensibility and his powerful poignantly ambivalent anticipation of the emerging nihilism in Western culture. And we see a curious, perhaps aptly postmodern analogy of this theme of archetypal sacrifice and martyrdom with the extraordinary inner trial and imprisonment - the intense intellectual ordeal, the extreme psychological isolation, and the eventually paralyzing madness - suffered at the birth of the postmodern by Nietzsche, who signed his last letters "The Crucified", and who died at the dawn of the twentieth century."

(Tarnas 1991: p. 395)

And I write:

On this occasion I want to turn to a piece of my own 'creative' writing. This is a short extract from a funeral scene from my half completed novel. It represents the eventual conclusion of Ralph's life of struggle. Ralph is clearly an autobiographical character, created to express, in his actions and in his life choices, much of the 'practical philosophy' I am trying to encapsulate in these pages.

I remember that when I first wrote the passage I was clearly hearing, in my imagination, a passage of music for solo trumpet playing the colour blue.

There is an alchemical quality as well as an archetypal aspect to the scene. Ralph's final physical presence melts away into the blue and gold of the sun's rays glancing through the blue stained glass. This is how I tried to capture it:

"They were gathered now in the considerable spaces of the Abbey, a contrast to the earlier communion in the little church of Holne. A silence descends which I can only describe as holy – a function of this place, no doubt, dedicated by its maker monks to their God, designed, it seems, to resound with silence, despite the many people gathered together in remembrance. I don't know what to expect, but as the silence gathers its own composure, the sun chooses to play its part, sending in rays of bright gold through the high windows.

From where I sit I can watch the light gradually spreading down the nave as the cloud cover parts. My eyes fix on the stunning blue of the wide, stained glass of the far window.

The light hits. Gold on Blue.

I melt clean away, my mind gone, as the opening trumpet notes sweep my spirit high up into the void.

From here I watch the monks make their slow procession, bringing a formal, theatrical ritual that Ralph would have appreciated. His being is now represented by the simple cross carved by his son and carried by him. The monks turn their familiar way, leaving him to place the cross. It now becomes a mast, placed on the little boat he gave me, a replica of his beloved Beulah. His spirit sails away, carried by the trumpet notes aloft, glinting in the sunlight.

A deep sigh sways through the congregation.

(Robin Ladkin, "Ham Stone", in draft.)

I feel the need to withdraw from my writing for a moment. The way I describe it to myself is that I am drawing on an emotional seam. It is rather like hacking away at rocky ground in the garden when suddenly the pick sinks into softer ground. It gives way and I sway, startled.

It is at such moments I turn to music.

I am conscious of having drawn upon a specifically religious set of images, setting and occasion to represent the spiritual. My ontology sees the spiritual as beyond, transcending the religious, but nevertheless, I am deeply impressed by formative experiences as a chorister, of the value of communion and the solace of music at a time when I was lonely, adrift, unsure of the world and my place in it.

(I am particularly struck by re-visiting this phrase – I was lonely, adrift, unsure – as I return to it in my revision. The character of this work as a ‘living inquiry’ strikes me forcibly, for I am in the process of revising my inner, emotional ground at the same time as I am revising the writing.

I had constructed an inner picture of myself as essentially melancholic, lonely and adrift, as a child, which returned in this passage about my spiritual state. But I am in the process of re-constructing an alternative picture, one based on life enhancing properties. Hence my re-turn to Nietzsche and his formulation of a new basis for values and morality.

My choice, for the moment, is to glory in Life's potential without at all misunderstanding 'our' potential, as human society, to do irreparable damage. I choose to suspend myself on the bridge I have constructed between Hope and Despair).

A DIALECTIC THOU - THE IMAGINATION

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Robin describes in this chapter the Imagination as the central connection between inner and outer, the place where decisions are made in a continuous collision of awareness. This is an expression of his personal knowing which deeply informs his practice as teacher and developing writer.

The imagination also figures as the central node of his thesis. As 'How I Learn' is the axis around which Robin's Bumpy Wheel of Learning rotates, so the Imagination is the bearing which carries the axis and facilitates the rotation. It is, in Robin's contention, the faculty through which knowing is mediated or constructed. The imagination is the organ which determines perception.

Robin's approach towards an understanding of the imagination and its role and power follows his own experience of growing appreciation. He opens the chapter with a piece, '**Discovering Imagination,**' which relates his learning 'at the feet' of Lindsay Clarke at Schumacher College. This is a reflection of Robin's initial excitement for the notion of Imagination as an enthusiastic, potential writer.

The second part to this chapter, '**Appreciating the Imagination,**' develops the theme of the power of the Imagination by referring to its central role in the work of Romantic poets, painters and composers. Robin refers, briefly, to a theme he has developed in his scientific reflections, (The Scientific Perspective was one of the essays he wrote for the Cranfield Case Pack) that the human faculty of Imagination and its poetic quality seem to be sought after by sections of the scientific community struggling to make sense of the ever deepening complexities of life. The Imagination itself, as an aspect of consciousness, defies present attempts to 'explain' mind as a material manifestation of brain.

In the third part of this chapter, '**Expressing the Imagination,**' Robin briefly alludes to the way he relates his internal appreciation for the Imagination to its external expression through his practice as teacher and writer. This third aspect is more fully covered in section 4 on his practice in the writings that appear there and in his report on his teaching practice.

The chapter ends with an Interlude which offers an image by Samuel Palmer coupled with a piece of music composed by Beethoven. In this way Robin admits to the limitations of language for capturing the essence of the faculty he so appreciates.

CHAPTER 5 - THE IMAGINATION.

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"Imagination is the Star in man"

Introduction.

I love the idea that we each carry in our brief span of life on earth a spark, perhaps a speck of cosmic dust released by the Big Bang, which it is our duty to cultivate.

I have long imagined that this might be soul. That at birth we adopt a speck of the Earth's soul to tend and nurture. Or it might be, as Ruland the Lexicographer suggests in the quotation above, the imagination. Both the soul and the imagination are, in my understanding, meeting places or conjunctions. I understand the soul to be the meeting place of ethereal spirit and earthly body and see, in a similar way, the imagination as the conjunction of 'inner' and 'outer', a meeting place we enjoy with our particular gift for consciousness.

I was first alerted to this idea, along with Ruland's quotation, by Lindsay Clarke at a course at Schumacher College. I pay tribute to this inspiration in the first section of this chapter.

Discovering the Imagination.

I want to go back to a sort of beginning, for me, a time and place when I felt I re-connected with ideas long submerged under the conventional pressures of my managerial career and a 'conventional' lifestyle in our materialistic culture.

I first visited Schumacher College at Dartington in the spring of 1991, attracted by the title of the course: "Earth, Soul and Imagination." This seemed, somehow, a perfect

conjunction of my interests, which were developing and converging at that time, in ecology, psychology and the creative arts, particularly writing.

Ted Roszak represented Earth and Soul by rehearsing with us the ideas which were to be published a year later in his book, "The Voice of the Earth, an Exploration of Ecopsychology." (Roszak 1993) I still remember vividly his opening question to us, which was how to define sanity! We live, it seemed clear and became clearer for me still, as I attended to Roszak's thesis and the country around Dartington, in an insane world of our own making. What peculiar psychological traits, at a mass level, could explain such a state?

(Even now, as I settle into revision a decade later, I am tempted to turn to the bookshelf to pick out a faded and bent original hardback edition of *The Voice of the Earth*, turning to a chapter opening I remember Ted reading, early on in his course, "City Pox and the Patriarchal Ego," (Roszak 1993: pp. 217-245). It spoke to me; he spoke to me. As others would.

The people who spoke to me, it seemed, wrote and taught. They taught out of the knowing they had crafted in their writing. This was my perception, anyway. And their writing was based on a particular mixture of scholarship and wisdom which seemed to emanate from them. This was particularly true of Ted Roszak and Lindsay Clarke in my fertile perception at that time, as it has been with others I have mentioned as 'teachers' in section 1.

Here was a model for me. Teachers who were writers. Which is why I wanted to write, too, from a place of really knowing my stuff! And I have subsequently learned that I like to teach, too. And in order to teach I need to study, reflect, learn, try out, revise – all those steps I rehearsed in the *Dialectic Thou* to this section.)

It was Lindsay Clarke who offered insights, magical to me, into the Imagination. He also confirmed my desire to write creatively. He was in the process of writing "Alice's Masque" at the time, subsequently published in 1994. I remember his reading, too, the opening chapter.

As with the Roszak so with the Clarke, I bought the first edition on release and devoured an account which spoke to me at three levels. In it Lindsay describes, in

exquisitely painful prose, the breakdown of my marriage. I was his lead character, such was my imaginative connection, confused by my mid-life crisis.

It also introduced for me the craft of weaving which continues to haunt me, both as a practising craft and as a metaphor for writing. A significant character in my novel, Ham Stone, (in draft) is clearly based on the Alice of Alice's Masque. She weaves threads dyed in colours created from natural stuffs, seaweed and herbs. And she holds a central place as the diviner, basing her commentary on the progress of the novel in Horary Astrology, as introduced to me by Geoffrey Cornelius at another special place, Ficino's academy in Florence. (as described in Section 1)

It is this 'otherworldly' aspect which was the third level at which Alice's Masque particularly spoke to me, or captured my imagination. Lindsay was experimenting, it seemed to me, with a way of presenting dreamlike or mythical material, set within a 'realistic' context. Lindsay describes his genre as that of the 'romance' and I take this to mean a form in which the realistic and the mythical coexist.

This course was my first experience of weaving, too, in the sense of teaching. I was captivated by the various strands of thought and tradition, craft and conversation, which combined in a pattern which seemed to open out multiple possibilities and depths of understanding. The golden thread that caught my attention then and is the central element to the pattern of my life since is the Imagination.

"I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination."

This is another quotation offered by Lindsay, this from John Keats, the precise original I have yet to find. I also have reference in my journals to a letter he (Keats) wrote in November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey in which he writes, "*The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream – he awoke and found it truth.*" (Keats 1994: p. 229). I have rather the same feeling about those three weeks I spent at Schumacher in 1991 – I woke from a dream and discovered the Imagination.

I opened this chapter with the idea of the Imagination as a meeting place or conjunction. Lindsay described this place of conjunction the 'mandorla' - the shape formed by the common area of two intersecting circles. The word simply means almond

in Italian, and the shape is of almond, the nut itself offering a three dimensional, corporeal element to the description. This is the ancient symbol of the Vesica Piscis or Fish's Belly and like the yin-yang circle or Solomon's seal it symbolizes the interpenetration and reconciliation of opposing principles.

I have earlier offered the bridge as a defining metaphor for much of my research effort, resulting from its original illumination at my first session in Bath. This almond shape, or mandorla, is an equally powerful visual symbol representing more the integrative aspect I have latterly seen in the bridge rather than its joining or crossing aspects.

The shape of an almond set on its side makes a wonderfully graceful arch – it could so easily be the natural suggestion for a suspension bridge's optimum curve. But it could also be seen as the shape of an eye.

It is an eye which can see in both directions, both inward and outward. And it is placed in the soul - 'the seat of the soul is where the inner and outer worlds meet', said Novalis. This eye, the eye of the imagination, is a soulful eye. At some curiously fundamental level I am deeply attached to the idea of perspective – that how we see informs how we know, an idea which is discussed in my Philosophical Reflection.

One of my long standing attachments is to goats. There is something wonderfully wise and free in being goat-like, I believe - an ability to live in wild country, with agility, somehow free spirits. And I am especially attracted to goats' eyes. I do not know if, in reality, they are so very different from, say, sheep's eyes, but somehow in the depth and steadfastness of a goat's gaze I find an ideal of seeing - both far and deep. So my own discovery of the mandorla is in the image of a goat's eye. It is another discovery which gets carried over into my novel, Ham Stone, as goats, and the keeping of goats, re-unites father and son and both to the earth.

In a subsequent visit I made to Schumacher college, equally significant as marking the end of my period of raw-searching, in April 1995, Lindsay Clarke again referred to his novel "Alice's Masque, by then published.

Referring to the imaginative mandorla as soul, he quoted from his book:-

"Here it is, and the wider the mandorla," Lindsay suggests, "the larger the soul. In my last novel the weaver Alice says 'I see it as the house of the imagination - the place where our inner world merges with the outer world to shape our experience. Isn't that where we live all the time - not just in the public world outside, or in the private world of dreams, but in the mandorla where they meet and deal with one another? It's our gateway to meaning. The problem is to keep it open so that the claims of both worlds are honoured.'

Later, she adds, 'All I'm sure of is that the wider you hold the mandorla open in the full sympathetic reach of the imagination - and no matter how fierce the strain can get sometimes - then the richer life feels in meaning.'

She's drawing attention there to the dual nature of the imagination itself, for as well as its poetical capacity for invention, it has an ethical aspect - the ability it gives us to imagine the world as others experience it, to feel how things are for them, to relate in compassion."

(Lindsay Clarke, from his address to the Dartington conference, Imagination, Myth and Meaning, April 1995)

Soul, in this reading, is the source of compassion. It is the conjoining faculty between body and spirit, in traditional thought, and here becomes the conjoining faculty between me and an other. I can 'see' another with compassion if I make a soul connection. And to do this I have to have compassion for myself, I have to hold wide open my own mandorla.

It is curious how we seem to have diminished the word, the concept of imagination in our present culture. In the same way that 'myth' has been reduced to an untruth so has the imagination, in some way, been reduced to an illusion. But the etymology of imagination is in the root word 'ma,' which leads to magic, to matter, to make and to mother. This family of words certainly suggests to me something more powerful and heartening than 'mere illusion.' I see in imagination the inventive capacity to bring about a compassionate transformation in the way that we relate to the stuff of which our world is made. I see the imagination as the bridge that Bateson seeks in a

passage I quoted in the chapter From Raw-Search to Re-Search. The relevant paragraph suggests:

"But there are bridges between the one sort of thought and the other and it seems to me the artists and poets are specifically concerned with these bridges - - - - Artistic skill is the combining of many levels of mind - unconscious, conscious and external - to make a statement of their combination."

This is my point - both the issue and the way to address it - the issue of combination, and the form of coherence - can we all not be artists in this sense? - that we can build our own bridges, that we can hold open our own awareness, in compassion? This proposition is more fully explored in my essay on The Aesthetic Perspective in Section 4.

(I am struck on re-connecting with this passage and its context by a sense of "that's what this is all about, really." I feel that I have been searching for this 'Batesonian' way of knowing for myself and for my practice. Hence the centrality of the notion of Imagination for my learning.

And as I return for a fourth revision I find such a strong connection with the work I have been doing on my methodology chapter in Section 2. So much of the argument presented by Richard Winter and his colleagues relates to the crucial role of the imagination in reflective practice. I see it (the imagination) as central to my understanding of the process of co-creation involved in living, a central tenet of the justification for my methodology and the crux of the argument I present in the Aesthetic Perspective in Section 4. But just at this moment I want to convey one of those moments of resonance which are such a delightful confirmation of our joined up, connected world. I have expressed elsewhere a crucial point in my learning process in which a connection is made, somehow a bunch of ideas coalesce. Here is such a passage from Winter et al:

"This basic human activity of reflective judgement has close parallels with the general cognitive role of the imagination (Kant 1987: p. 182): it represents our ability to find an objective orderliness in our experience by projecting onto the natural world the cognitive structure of our own minds (p. 19). And since this orderliness is indeed a projection of our own minds onto the world (rather than a set of objective facts about the world) we experience a specific sense of satisfaction and pleasure when we find apparent

empirical confirmation for our thinking, i.e. when an experience or a group of experiences suddenly falls into place as forming an ordered unity (pp.23-7). Mary Warnock ends her analysis of imagination by echoing Kant in celebrating the importance of such moments of insight: it is at such moments, she says, that we feel, intensely, the value of our experience through our power to understand it in ways which go beyond our merely subjective impressions (Warnock 1976: pp. 206-7). Our sense of elation at such moments, one might suggest, also following Kant, comes from a sudden, creative sense of being 'at one with' the universe. At such moments, says James Joyce, an experience takes on a sort of radiant clarity, as we grasp a sense of its underlying structure and integrity (Joyce 1956 : pp. 216-17)". (Winter et al 1999: p. 197 - references retained in the script to indicate the sense of connection through aspects of my philosophic and romantic reflections).

I want to end this first part of the chapter, therefore, with a notion resurrected from my notes about the alchemical view of imagination. I continue to think of myself as alchemist, perhaps more experienced now, and as such connected with a long tradition of folk who have been concerned for connection rather than separation. This quotation sits in my journal at the time of Lindsay's second conference address, in 1995, and is presumably my recollection of a reference he made to Jung:

"The imaginatio, as the alchemists understand it, is in truth a key that opens the door to the secret of the opus The place or medium of realization is neither mind nor matter, but the intermediate realm of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by a symbol. The symbol is neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal. It is always both."

It is this sense of a different form of conjunction that I am in search of, in my own thought process and in my development work. The bridge between on the one hand, let us say for example, the rational and on the other hand, in this case, the irrational, is neither a stand off, an impasse, nor a fixed point of resolution, but a dynamic third possibility, containing both but different from either - an intermediate realm or subtle reality. This view of the imagination's connection with nature seems poised in a directionless possibility. And I turn to the appreciation of artists for their understanding.

Appreciating the Imagination – a Romantic View.

As an opening to this section I record another of the quotations which has lived with me since hearing Lindsay read it at the first Schumacher course. This is from William Blake, surely one of the greatest figures in the Romantic tradition:-

"Fun I love, but too much fun is of all things the most loathsome. Mirth is better than fun, and happiness is better than mirth. I feel that a man may be happy in this world. And I know that this world is a world of imagination and vision. I see everything I paint in this world, but everybody does not see alike. To the eyes of a miser a guinea is more beautiful than the sun, and a bag worn with the use of money has more beautiful proportions than a vine filled with grapes. The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination Nature is imagination itself. As the eye is formed such are its powers. You certainly mistake when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world. To me this world is all one continued vision of fancy or imagination, and I feel flattered when I am told so."

(William Blake, from a letter to Dr Trusler, 23rd August 1799 quoted in Wilson 1932: p. 215)

This quotation from Blake speaks to me particularly of our connection with nature – “Nature is imagination itself.”

One of the significant life choices I made at the transitional moment I have described in section 1 was to move, with Donna, back to what I considered to be my ‘home’ in the South Hams in Devon. Here I am surrounded by familiar field patterns. I walk through woods unchanged since I played there as a child. And in this regard I could be accused of resorting to the romantic dream of a rural utopia long since lost.

But my connection with nature is freshly found. My ‘knowing’ of this connection is intellectually supported by my scholarship and emotionally nurtured through my appreciation for the artistic lens, especially of the Romantics. It is significantly challenged by the special connection that Donna has, quite differently from mine. My

sense of connection is constantly mediated through my senses and lenses whereas hers seems to be direct.

My sense of connection is spiritual, especially with the sea which surrounds this magical land and the moor which bounds it. Both feature fully in Ham Stone. Keats captures, for me, something of the quality of the sea to which I return from my work forays into the bustling world of organisations:-

On The Sea
It keeps eternal whispering around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be moved for days from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of heaven were unbound.
Oh ye! Who have your eye-balls vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! Whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody, -
Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired!

(Keats 1994: p. 18)

Oh me! For when I have my eye-balls vexed or my ears are dinn'd with uproar rude, indeed, I turn to the sea for a wide perspective and hear in its depths a wisdom that settles my anxiety.

But I neither want to characterise my return to the country as “romantic” in the common, perjorative sense nor make the mistake of representing the Romantic’s reverence for nature as singular. My whole argument about the nature of the Imagination

is its conjunctive quality and I believe that the Romantics maintained a more complex view of reality than is often levelled at them.

Richard Tarnas identifies this quality clearly in a passage comparing the Romantic to the Scientific approach to knowing:

"In contrast to the scientist's quest for general laws defining a single objective reality, the Romantic gloried in the unbounded multiplicity of realities pressing in on his subjective awareness, and in the complex uniqueness of each object, event, and experience presented to his soul. Truth discovered in divergent perspectives was valued above the monolithic and univocal ideal of empirical science. For the Romantic, reality was symbolically resonant through and through, and was therefore fundamentally multivalent, a constantly changing complex of many-levelled meanings, even of opposites."

(Tarnas 1991: p. 368)

Oh!, it is this sense of diversity, complexity, many sided, multi-levelled reality I strive to open out for my clients, as opposed to and from the single, simple, prescriptive resolution. I am interested in the intuitive, instinctive, living personal risk of leadership compared and contrasted to the definitive, planned, constrained processes of management. This is how I am trying to live my life, with compassion and connection, and the notion I am advocating through my teaching and writing.

I have another great model set firmly within the Romantic tradition, an exemplar much like Ficino is to me at an earlier stage of our history. Goethe was archetypally scientist and poet. Goethe's way of science pursued understanding through the experience of the "authentic wholeness" of what he observed.

I refer to "Goethe's Way of Science" in my Teaching Practice chapter in Section 4. Henri Bortoft's "The Wholeness of Nature – Goethe's Way of Science," 1996 is a much annotated reference for me, a source I return to for 'understanding.' For it seems to me that Goethe found a way of understanding which included meaning – this is the great prize for me of an integrated or conjunctive use of the Imagination.

I am persuaded by the notion that the Romantics were bridge builders rather than simply opponents of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment and have recently

found support for this notion in another treasure of a book by Mary Midgeley, “Science and Poetry.” (Midgeley, 2001)

Midgeley describes the great Romantics as bridge builders, making the effort to bring both sides together, which is just what made them so great. Wordsworth and Coleridge, in particular, went to great lengths to stress that the antithesis between thought and feeling was a false one. They insisted that both were aspects of a single whole that might best be understood by attending closely to its middle term, imagination. Here was the scene of the process of creation, both in art and science – not a mass of idle and delusive fancy, but a constructive faculty, building experience into visions which made both feeling and thought effective. A poet, said Wordsworth, had to be “*a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply . . . our thoughts . . . are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings.*” (quoted in Midgeley 2001: p. 55)

In her argument Mary Midgeley reckons that, “*bad philosophical reasoning was widespread and enormously influential throughout the Age of Reason. It seemed to leave humanity only two choices. Either we could accept an enormous lie – the excitements of normal experience and the feelings that go with it – or, if we rejected that lie, we could face the truth, which was an impersonal, ghostly world of scientific abstractions. . . . this muddled antithesis of scientific reality versus everyday illusion lined up with a whole constellation of other crude antitheses – science versus literature, intellect versus imagination, analysis versus synthesis, expert versus amateur, man versus woman, adult versus child – thus distorting the whole picture of life and making many of its practical problems look insoluble.*” (ibid: pp. 54-55)

My hope for humankind, and the many species we endanger, is that we are beginning to emerge from this “bad philosophical reasoning” which persists into the present age with disastrous consequences. The argument I rehearsed in my Scientific Perspective, which I have chosen not to include in this thesis for it is largely unoriginal and well represented elsewhere (for example in “New Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science, edited by Willis Harman with Jane Clark and published by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 1994) is that science itself is reaching a point at which its separating

and reducing characteristics can no longer explain the marvelous complexities it discovers.

The Imagination can not be explained through material reductionism, I believe, and therein lies our ultimate hope. And my advocacy is for us to relish this capacity through re-discovering the aesthetic principle as active, turning the inner imaginative reflection into outer, artistic manifestation in all that we do. This is certainly my challenge to myself in learning to lead my life well.

I turn in the third part of this chapter to a brief description of the way that I turn my inner appreciation for the Imagination into outer expression through a sense of how I make my life choices and in my work as teacher or developer. This aspect of my practice is more fully explored in the next Section on What I Do.

Expressing the Imagination .

I open this third section with another crucial quotation. Crucial for me in that it expresses my experience of developing my capacity for making choices as a consequence of expanding my awareness of both my inner processes and my outer circumstances in a conjunctive collision:

"The real problem comes from the fact that outer and inner world are interdependent at every moment. We are simply the locus of their collision. Two worlds, with mutually contradictory laws, or laws that seem to us to be so, colliding afresh every second, struggling for peaceful coexistence. And whether we like it or not our life is what we make of that collision and struggle. So what we need, evidently, is a faculty that embraces both worlds simultaneously. A large, flexible grasp, an inner vision which holds wide open, like a great theatre, the arena of contention, and which pays equal respects to both sides. Which keeps faith with the world of things and the world of spirits equally. This really is imagination."

(Ted Hughes, quoted by Lindsay Clarke, Schumacher College, 1991 to be found in Hughes 1994: p.150).

The Hughes' quote contains elements which inform my practice, certainly, but also my way of seeing the world, the inner and the outer arcs of attention which form in their conjunction the mandorla or the theatre, the place of their connection and collision. Creating that place is a skill I strive for in my teaching practice, in my personal meditative practices and in my writing, too.

I like to think of my work as a developer, as teacher or coach, as enabling the faculty of imagination to effect its magic. I have paid an increasing emphasis on trying to get the conditions and circumstances for learning as opening out and holding open "a great theatre, the arena of contention." The nature of theatre is an area of interest I still intend to pursue more fully for it feels to me as though we have much to learn from theatrical practice in the world of leadership development, for instance.

I have heard mention of Peter Brook talking about "the theatre of the Invisible - made - Visible; the notion that the stage is a place where the invisible can appear has a deep hold on our thoughts - - - and a Holy Theatre not only presents the invisible but also confers conditions that make it perceptible." (RGL journal notes, referring to Brook's autobiographical reflections in "The Empty Space".) And I like the notion that in a theatrical setting, which might simply be a way of holding attention and tension, that perceptual shifting of frame I see as 'second order' learning might occur.

I am making a distinction here for an 'order' of learning in which the perceptual shift itself is the basis for learning. My phrasing is to distinguish between 'seeing something differently' and 'seeing differently.' It is this process of seeing differently in which I believe the Imagination is at work, imaging across the inner and outer awarenesses.

And I want to end the chapter with an image, an illumination of this way of seeing both inner and outer together, supported by a piece of music steeped in the Romantic tradition.

A Concluding Image

I would like to close with a contemplation of an image by Samuel Palmer, which for me has become an icon of the Imagination. Palmer painted at the same time as Blake and was clearly influenced by Blake's philosophy. But where Blake's images were drawn from classical mythology, Palmer relied on his own particular vision of nature. And he reproduced his vision in a remarkable way in which neither the perspective, nor the source of light, comply with a representative view. It seems that Palmer was offering us a vision in both directions at the same time, the view that he could see of the outside, but also, somehow, a view into his way of seeing, an inner spiritual awareness which infuses the image. The image I have chosen is "The Gleaming Fields." The actual picture, which is in the Tate Britain, is not much bigger than the re-production here.

As I gaze into Palmer's vision I see a dedicated, detailed, devotional re-capturing of an essential quality in Nature which was in danger of being disregarded, indeed ripped apart by the new scientific consciousness, with the consequences we still hardly dare contemplate to-day.

In the way that I have borrowed from Eva Loewe (referred to in Section 1) I suggest that you might like to combine the viewing of the Palmer image with a short musical extract composed by Beethoven which is the next passage on the cd. It is very familiar, taken from his sixth, the Pastoral, symphony. It has, therefore, an obvious connection, a musical picture in the passage I have selected, "Szene am Bach," Scene by the brook.

But I have two further points of reference and reverence for this work. Beethoven was clearly conveying something of the same quality of thinking as informed Palmer in his painting and the Romantic poets in their work. This is not simply an emotional statement, an outpouring of feeling towards a natural scene. It is an imaginative call to attention to the potential destructive powers unleashed by the scientific revolution and its industrial consequences.

Beethoven was deeply interested in the works of contemporary philosophers, particularly Schelling. Schelling proclaimed that *"To philosophize about nature means to create nature, for nature's true meaning could be produced only from within man's Intellectual Imagination"*. (Quoted in Tarnas 1991: p. 369)

Beethoven's genius was to reflect the universal quality of the imagination through his work. I invite you, then, to listen to the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony number 6, the "Pastoral", composed while he was staying in the country outside Vienna.

And you might contemplate that at the time he was going deaf, just between the composition of the fifth and sixth symphonies. I was much moved by visiting the museum established in Beethoven's house in Bonn which contains a collection of the apparatus he used to try and improve his hearing, early versions of hearing aids. And there are little note books he used to write messages to people. What an extraordinary ear he must have had to compose such an account of a natural scene from within himself. It is the same imaginative power I see in the Palmer, inner and outer rendered together.

(And I appreciate, as I re-visit this passage of text written originally some four years ago, how my appreciation for hearing, and hearing differently, has developed in conjunction with my notion of seeing differently. It was about at the time I first wrote this passage that I realised, and had confirmed, that I was suffering from the condition known as tinnitus, which was most likely to persist for the remainder of my life. I have always been appreciative of my power of sight which has been conditioned by the fact that I really only see through one eye. I am now increasingly aware of the fragility of my sense of hearing. These physical manifestations serve to emphasise for me the metaphorical illuminations I phrase as seeing and hearing differently, aspects of my learning).



A DIALECTIC THOU - TELLING A STORY

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Introduction to the Content of the Chapter.

This chapter is constructed with two brief framing explanations about story-telling which introduce the second of Robin's epiphanic stories which he calls Piper at the Gates of Dawn. (The first such was Son of Fire-Arse in Section 1)

The first framing discussion is on **The Mythic Quality of Story**. In this Robin suggests that the power of story is in making meaning at a level which affects perception. We see, he argues from his own experience, through the stories we tell of our own lives.

The second reflection is on **Writing a Story**, as distinct from telling a story. In this section Robin argues for the subtlety of the oral tradition and regrets the limitations of the literal form.

On the basis of these two framing ideas, Robin attempts to write a story which has attained mythical status in the way he views, and therefore leads, his own life. And he tries to do so in a way which captures some of the subtlety he espouses in the oral tradition.

Robin completes the chapter with a **Reflection on Telling my Story**, in which he considers some of the issues he has encountered in both content and form

Introduction to the Significance of the Chapter.

The Dialectic Thou to this Section suggested that What I Know is essentially a selection of significant aspects of Robin's scholastic learning. This may have been true of his Philosophic Reflection and the Imagination, but the balance between scholastic and intuitive learning shifts in this chapter.

The 'truth' is something like - "These four topics, the Philosophical, Imagination, Story-telling and the Impact of Art and Music, are all 'knowings' deeply embedded in my, well, my sense of knowing. My 'scholarship' has been sufficient for me to establish them as 'pillars' of my practice. That is why I select them - for their significance for me".

Robin does not view the outcomes of his scholarship as anything like definitive, substantive arguments. The 'truth' he is telling here is the significance of these selected topics for his learning and practice. He is not claiming that he 'knows' in any profound, propositional sense, 'about' storytelling. But he does 'know' that storytelling is how he makes sense of his life - it is that crucial.

The story that Robin tells here is 'factual' in the sense that it relates to events which certainly, in his experience, 'happened'. The consequences were profound. It is not a 'fiction', at least in the sense of 'made up', the notion we often describe as 'imagined'.

Robin's view is that we 'make up' stories about ourselves all the time - we 'construct' meanings and sense makings through the application of our marvelous imaginations. The stories we tell ourselves are 'true', maybe, 'factions' in the sense that they include 'actual' events. But stories are "'fictions' in the less familiar sense of the word 'shaped'" (Winter et al 1999: p. 56).

It is in the 'shaping' of the stories we tell ourselves, in Robin's contention, that the meaning we make of them lies. And this is an act of interpretation, or construction, conducted through the imagination which leads us into the muddle between fact and fiction. My 'fact' is your 'perception'. But the 'facts' we make out of stories, especially those with mythical status, are powerful indeed.

CHAPTER 6 - TELLING A STORY

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Introduction.

I have a particular personal story which serves to define, at some level, the way I see and lead my life. It is a defining story and I believe that this quality of definition is what makes the difference between a story and a myth.

The Mythic Quality of Story.

Myth is a term which, like imagination or romantic, seems to have taken on a perjorative or de-meaning connotation in our 'modern' culture. Somehow the very quality that I find in each of these terms is the quality which is subject to this critical turn. I have already written about my attachment to imagination and romantic in the previous chapter. Let me turn here to myth.

My dictionary confirms this curious dual aspect of myth by describing it as:-

> "*a traditional story - - providing an explanation for or embodying a popular idea concerning some natural or social phenomenon or some religious belief,* " and also
> "*a widely-held story or belief; a misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth;*". (Ref OED)

I am interested in both of these aspects of myth, their power for good or evil. For both speak to myth's power.

We live our lives, it seems to me, according to a series of myths, both personal and collective. And some of these myths have that quality of explaining natural or social phenomena while others seem to me to wholly mislead us, are gross misrepresentations of the truth and cause us to act in 'senseless' ways.

One meta-myth that I am keen to explode is the notion that there is 'a truth,' which is what attracts me to the post-modern epistemology in which there are multiple truths. As

a consequence of this belief in multiple realities, which is presumably a myth, too, I am clear that I choose the myths that guide me. One such personal myth, for it has outgrown simple story, is the one that I want to tell here.

But what am I suggesting is the 'outgrowing' quality that lifts a story into myth? I turn to Joseph Campbell and an exchange between him and Bill Moyers in "The Power of Myth":-

***Moyers:** I came to understand from reading your books that what human beings have in common is revealed in myths. Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance. We all need to tell our story and to understand our story. We all need to understand death and to cope with death, and we all need help in our passages from birth to life and then to death. We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are.*

***Campbell:** People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. That's what it's all finally about, and that's what these clues help us to find within ourselves.*

***Moyers:** Myths are clues?*

***Campbell:** Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life.*

***Moyers:** What we're capable of knowing and experiencing within?*

***Campbell:** Yes.*

***Moyers:** You changed the definition of a myth from the search for meaning to the experience of meaning.*

***Campbell:** Experience of life."*

(Campbell with Moyers 1988: p. 5)

I love this exchange. But it was the story I am about to tell that enabled me, I believe, to understand what Jo Campbell was talking about. I learned to experience life and in doing so began to appreciate the spiritual potentialities within me. In this respect myth does not 'outgrow' story but 'ingrows' it – it deepens our appreciation for life.

We have in my story the emerging qualities of that classic myth, the hero's quest.

"The essential drama of mythology is the visionary quest which is the myth of the

hero, and this is the myth of the transformation of consciousness, which requires the death of the old and the birth of the new. Drawing on the continuous rhythm of perceptual renewal in Nature, the hero myth acts as a guide, first to the necessary death, and then to the promise, in times of weariness and hopelessness, that a rebirth will follow, that there is somewhere to go. Its particular function is to carry the human spirit forward, assisting people across the difficult thresholds of transformation which demand a change not only of conscious but also of unconscious life."

(Jules Cashford, *The Nature of the Quest*, paper presented at Dartington Spring Conference, 1993)

But the classic denouement of the hero's quest is to return to one's starting point transformed internally, enabled to see the same context through different lenses.

In my view, though, it is not just what you tell, in a story or myth, but how you tell it. And this is the second aspect of telling a story I want to reflect on before telling my own.

Writing a Story.

My presentational task, as I first imagined it, was to learn to write in a way which was faithful to the narrative in my head. My experience is that I am telling myself a story much of the time. Lindsay Clarke suggests that we "*tell our lives in stories – the story of our day, of our journeys, our accidents and adventures, our joys and griefs and tribulations. It's how we shape raw events into communicable experience and thereby effect a passage from feeling into meaning.*" (Clarke, Dartington Conference address, 1995)

This expressive aspect of the presentational has been turned inward for much of my inquiry, into a reflexive method through writing. But the issue of form has stayed with me.

I feel that as an emergent writer I am in search of a craft skill which is to convey the flexibility of the spoken word into print. David Abram, another of my key teachers, wrote of this objective:

"In this work I have tried to reacquaint the reader with a mode of awareness that precedes and underlies the literate intellect, to a way of thinking and speaking that strives to be faithful not to the written record but to the sensuous world itself, and to

the other bodies or beings that surround us. For such an oral awareness, to explain is not to present a set of finished reasons, but to tell a story."

(David Abram 1996: p. 264-5)

Abram's book represents a sustained argument for our re-connection to a sensible world, pointing out along the way the particular separating effect of literacy, although he is careful not to suggest that the advent of phonetic writing was the sole factor in the process whereby *"civilization has turned in upon itself, isolating itself from the breathing earth."* (ibid: p. 263)

However he excited me with an analysis of the way in which language, in its written form, has taken at least a couple of turns in this 'turning in' or separating process. The first such shift is in the invention of the aleph-beth:-

"With the advent of the aleph-beth, a new distance opens up between human culture and the rest of nature. To be sure, pictographic and ideographic writing already involved a displacement of our sensory participation from the depths of the animate environment to the flat surface of our walls, of clay tablets, of the sheet of papyrus. However, the written images themselves often related us back to the other animals and the environing earth. The pictographic glyph or character still referred, implicitly, to the animate phenomenon of which it was the static image; it was that worldly phenomenon, in turn, that provoked from us the sound of its name. The sensible phenomenon and its spoken name were, in a sense, still participant with one another – the name a sort of emanation of the sensible entity. With the phonetic aleph-beth, however, the written character no longer refers us to any sensible phenomenon out in the world, or even to the name of such a phenomenon, but solely to a gesture to be made by the human mouth. There is a concerted shift of attention away from any outward or worldly reference of the pictorial image, away from the sensible phenomenon that had previously called forth the spoken utterance, to the shape of the utterance itself, now invoked directly by the written character. A direct association is established between the pictorial sign and the vocal gesture, for the first time completely bypassing the thing pictured." (ibid: p.100-1, emphasis his)

I remember well the moment I first encountered this passage in David's book. I felt a great lurch in my belly. I wrote in my journal at the time that I felt, for a moment, that

“This was It,” the moment of dislocation I was somehow aware of and had previously placed on the Agricultural Revolution, or the Industrial Revolution or its preparatory phase, the Scientific Revolution – or more latterly the Information Revolution or the Genetic Revolution. (They are coming faster, these days!) But here was an argument that took me way back into a much more distant history and spoke of the medium that I think of as my own, writing.

I wonder the extent to which my recourse to imagery and music, which pre-dated this reading, are an instinctive return to a more sensible form of communication, one in which the world of nature is re-represented. For, in truth, I have maintained a particular interest for visual art works which maintain some sense of representation, even if thoroughly distorted, rather than purely abstract works.

Abrams turns this particular wheel of technology once more:-

“This ancient alphabet, (the Hebrew aleph-beth,) in contrast to its European derivatives, had no letters for what we have come to call “the vowels.” The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew aleph-beth were all consonants. Thus, in order to read a text written in traditional Hebrew, one had to infer the appropriate vowel sounds from the consonantal context, and add them when sounding out written syllables.” (ibid: p. 241)

This is Abrams’ point which led me to an understanding of the origin of the notion of the ‘literal’ truth. This is a truth which is ‘fixed,’ for it is written down. At least in the traditional Hebrew rendering, a truth so written is still open to the interpretation of the reader who has to infer the appropriate vowels. There is still a significant element of participation by the reader in what is to be read.

But Abrams goes on with an explanation for this ‘fact’ of the Hebrew aleph-beth which again excited my physical body on first reading. Here is a tangible recognition of the power of the aesthetic, I believe, in its sense of ‘in-drawing breath.’

You will find my excitement at this idea translated into outer expression in the chapter The Aesthetic Perspective which is in the next section, in the part entitled “When Breathing and Consciousness Return.” What evokes my excitement in this way?

“Another reason for the absence of written vowel sounds in the traditional aleph-beth has to do with the nature of the vowel sounds themselves. While consonants are those shapes made by the lips, teeth, tongue, palate, or throat, that

momentarily obstruct the flow of breath and so give form to our words and phrases, the vowels are those sounds that are made by the unimpeded breath itself. The vowels, that is to say, are nothing other than sounded breath. And the breath, for the ancient Semites, was the very mystery of life and awareness, a mystery inseparable from the invisible ruach – the holy wind or spirit. The breath was the vital substance blown into Adam’s nostrils by God himself, who thereby granted life and consciousness to humankind. It is possible, then, that the Hebrew scribes refrained from creating distinct letters for the vowel-sounds in order to avoid making a visible representation of the invisible. To fashion a visible representation of the vowels, of the sounded breath, would have been to concretize the ineffable, to make a visible likeness of the divine. It would have been to make a visible representation of a mystery whose very essence was to be invisible and hence unknowable – the sacred breath, the holy wind. And thus it was not done.” (ibid: pp. 241-242, emphasis his.)

Ah, that we could show such restraint to-day, when anything that can be done is done!

I am plunged by this reference into a particular pair of images introduced to me by Noel Cobb and Eva Loewe (of whom I wrote in Section 1 as teachers from within the Convivium for Archetypal Psychology). They introduced me to the work of Edvard Munch. His painting “The Scream” is well known, almost an icon. I reproduce it in the short article The Way of Beauty which appears in Section 4. When Noel first introduced it to me he pointed out Munch’s words at the time, *“And I felt a great infinite scream pass through Nature.”*

Munch painted an earlier piece, in fact he painted it many times. It is a picture of his sister dying of consumption, “The Sick Child,” (1885-86) his mother, who also died of the disease, at her bed-side. When I view this image I can almost hear the rasping, occasional, breath, dreadful silences punctuating each, life-giving, in-drawing.

It seems to me that Munch captured the sanctity of breath, the basis of the word aesthetic, in these two images, the in-drawing of life and Nature’s scream.

(I include a copy of Munch’s image with this chapter).

My own intention in my writing, in this thesis in general and in my story in particular, is to convey the complexity of truth, its many-sidedness, as well as its depth, its meaning. Speech is alive as spoken and can so easily die on the page.

As a writer I want to try and re-capture some of that hesitant quality I imagine the Hebrew investing in his reading – searching for the right vowel sound and thanking God for the breath it invokes.

So, I have set my story up on these two pillars – to convey its mythical quality in a way which is alive to the senses.

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.

Once upon a time a troubled, middle aged man made his way to Schumacher College, close to where he thought of as home in the folds of the South Hams in Devon. He was troubled by the world which seemed to him to have gone mad, or at least the human aspect of the world which he knew well, the world of white, Western, middle aged, middle class, materialistic men. And he was troubled by being troubled.

He was attracted to the course, which was to run at Schumacher, by its scholar in residence, the writer Lindsay Clarke. He had studied with Lindsay in this same place some four years earlier. Lindsay had written a great book, in this troubled man's estimation, *The Chymical Wedding*, which epitomised for him the kind of writing he aspired to himself. And Lindsay had written a subsequent book, *Alice's Masque*, which was about a similarly troubled, middle aged man.

He arrived at Schumacher ready to write. And he had brought with him an old children's story, *The Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame (Grahame 1951). He had brought it in response to Lindsay's suggestion, "*to come prepared to tell the story of a particular myth which you feel speaks most closely to your own experience and which may already have helped you to recognize and achieve a creative relation with key formative moments in your life.*" (quoted from preparatory material for the course *Imagination, Myth and Meaning* by Lindsay Clarke)

He knew, this troubled but perceptive man, that he wanted to read the chapter "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn." And he knew that he wanted to get up early one morning to see the dawn rise.

So, the scene is set for Robin to tell his story as the troubled man.

I had come to Schumacher with a heavy heart, had I but had the sense to feel it. I had brought, along with my book and my journal, my tape player. Prominent amongst the tapes I had selected, in that it was most often played, was "The Ghost Trio", Beethoven's extraordinary evocation of a quality I felt.

My heart was heavy just when it should have been light. For as well as attend to the course I had arrived in Devon with the intent to complete the purchase of an old stable block which would convert into a wonderful writing retreat and retirement home, after many years of search and with the eventual agreement of my wife. This transaction would seal a year of re-engagement with my wife, from whom I had become estranged. We had celebrated twenty five years together with our agreement to make the purchase. I should have been happy.

But then - - - -

"You get by, an hour at a time, mulling things over, nosing for a future, not content, but managing; then the wires cross with someone else's world and suddenly you're a shambles again. Actuality is elsewhere. You're dispossessed."

(Clarke 1989: p.18)

Thus Lindsay's protagonist reflects on his first encounter with Laura, the free-spirited American girl.

But I was immune. I had had my fling. I was back in harness, well boundaried, looking forward to a future as ageing, dignified writer. Surely. But there was this dawn to see.

I slipped away from time to time to attend to my past life, only I did not know it. I was excited by accompanying a water diviner as he processed up and down the stable's walled garden, birch branch leaping as he spoke of the depth and flow of water below. Yes, surely, we would be self-sufficient, our own water to nurture an acre of ground, all we would need to - - - - and so my historic thoughts meandered on. And I wrote.

I wrote, on the back of a scrap of paper I have retrieved from my journal:

Its very lonely, locked inside
unwanted by the outside world
this is my reality
my learned state

until a moment ago.

You smiled
and suddenly the possibility
for a moment then
as my heart kicked an extra beat
and hurt

hurt like hell
first intimations of a new possibility
that you care.

And I wrote out an extract from a copy of "Women Who Run With The Wolves" I had somehow picked off the library shelf:

"She lives where the dead come to be kissed and the living send their prayers. She lives in the place where language is made. She lives on poetry and percussion and singing. She lives on quarter notes and grace notes and in a cantata, in a sestina and in the blues. She is the moment just before inspiration bursts upon us. She lives in a faraway place that breaks through to our world."

(Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992: p.14)

Here I was on my quest, the Piper at the Gates of Dawn my inspiration, separated from my normal life and routines and responsibilities, escaped into a world of melancholy music and historic activity.

We exchanged poetry early each morning, slipping it under each other's door.

And one morning I rose earlier than usual, for I had determined that this was to be the day I would experience the dawn. I made my way out of the residential block, around the corner where her room was. I noticed her light was on. No doubt she would be at her writing already, scattering drafts across the floor. I knocked at her window, to announce my intention, for we had talked of my quest to witness the dawn.

I made my way up the familiar path into the wood. The morning was quiet and still, a pre-dawn hush hanging in the misty air. I had marked my spot on earlier excursions through the wood, a bench nestling at its edge, overlooking fields and beyond them, more

trees rising up the far slope. I reckoned that the angle of the sun's rising trajectory would soon clear the far trees and allow me a wide view along the valley.

I arrived and sat. All was well. I sat and began to see.

The change in the light was imperceptible at first. Actually I did not really see the light change. What I saw was a gradual filling of form, shapes taking on three dimensions out of the misty mysteriousness, trees declaring themselves, moment by moment, and beneath them the corn, gently weaving in the breeze.

The corn was becoming green, for as form emerged so did colour, an array of greens set against the blue grey of the lightening sky.

The sun announced its possibility, hesitantly it seemed. Then a moment or two later it declared itself, with a new clarity, in a pink wash underlining the clouds, splashed across the sky. Now my attention was truly engaged, no longer concerned with the surrounding countryside, but focused on this pink wash and an accompanying shift in the blue, a deeper, clearer blue now gradually set off against white as the greyness dissolved.

For a moment the sky held this pattern, pink against white against blue until my eye was drawn to a more particular location, the pink much deeper here, a red rim beginning to suggest itself under the clouds, where they fringed the trees.

And then the rim itself dissolved and a new note crept in to the palette, the colours shifting quite swiftly now, as a yellow appeared, a definite shape making its way over the rim of trees, a familiar curve now appearing, sending direct rays into the cloud cover to refresh the refracted pink into a rapturous mixture. The clouds announced themselves anew in warm gold.

Again my eye focused, now intent on the rising and filling rim, a sliver of light soon growing into a quarter, then a semi-circle, all the time climbing, surprisingly fast, up above the trees, now filling more as it eased its way through the cloud cover into a sudden, deep glorious blue, up in the sky above, my head tilting to take in its stupendous, inexorable climb, warm yellow gold reaching my upturned face.

And as it climbed free, free of the earth's horizon, free of the clinging clouds, free unto itself, the Sun spoke, quite directly to me and said,

"To-day I rise for you!"

Pause

For a while I did not hear. I saw, for sure, spellbound by really seeing the sun rise, the inexorability of it and the wonder of it, the ordinariness of the event completely transformed into this most momentous occasion.

I realised this daily blessing, the source of life, repeated itself, day after day.

But to-day it rose for me. I heard it say so. I heard and felt like Mole, rooted to the spot, overwhelmed by the emotions he seemed to struggle with. For fear was certainly present, as was awe, but also love, a deep bond of recognition. The sun was asking me to see it, just me for the moment, to see it and the significance of its rising.

And at this moment I felt both my significance and my insignificance.

The sun rose for me, a being prepared, for the moment, to question the point of being. And it shone its warmth on and into me, in a recognition and affirmation.

And although I knew of the distance of the sun from me, the vastness of this earth I sat on, itself a mere pinprick in the still greater vastness of the cosmos, I heard the sun say that my speck, the speck that is me, does count, if I want it to.

I now know, in a way that no amount of abstract, dynamic cosmic geometry will deny, that for a moment, at least, I was on a still place of a still earth and the sun rose in an arc above me. And as well as sending rays of life giving warmth, the sun sent a message of hope.

And I was not the only one to see the sun rise that morning, for she had responded to my knock at her window and sought the sunrise, too, hoping to join me. In the event she had found her own vantage point, sat upon a sawn tree trunk, not more than a hundred yards away. We had seen the same sun rise and now agreed, in moments in which we allowed the boundaries to crumble, that the sun had, indeed, risen for us.

We had been brought together by *The Chymical Wedding*. I found this that day in another book taken from the library shelf and copied into my journal:

Albedo Aubade

heart-fire

illumines

eyes meeting

*the moon
with a moon
that mirrors
heaven
with heaven*

*so moon-beams
may ignite
the sun*

*and huntress
dart flame
from each hair
of his mane*

*till we learn
from the luminous
ocean we bathe in
the first
distillation
of love*

(Storhaug 1997: p. 92)

So this is a love story. In alchemical terms, this is coagulatio, the greater work.

"The two natures change one another reciprocally, the body 'incorporating the spirit, and the spirit transmuting the body - - - This is the dissolution of the body, and the fixation of the Spirit, both processes constituting one and the same work."

(Artephius, in Ramsay 1997: p. 93)

I end my story here. Its final scene is depicted in the image I have selected for the end-piece to this section on what I know.

I know that on one day the sun rose for me. And my life has not been the same since.

A Reflection on Telling a Story.

I have no way of telling how my telling of the story worked for you. This is one obvious limitation of the literal process, its absence of connection.

A couple of comments on form:-

I know the story so well! It makes it terribly hard to know what to put in and what to leave out.

One of the strategies I noticed myself adopting, as I revised again, was the taking out of material, paring it down to what feels like its essence. This is so different from trying to 'explain' something when you have to try and cover all the points, justify claims, anticipate questions. In the story form my assumption is that I am trying to create the possibility that your imagination, as reader, will fill in the missing space, make the links, and that this active participation in the reading adds a quality of engagement.

I also noticed my wish to start in the second person and then switch to the first. I wonder about the theatrical process of setting up the scene, and then launching into the action, the collision of inner and outer worlds meeting.

A third aspect of form I debated in the telling was the use of prose and poetry. I decided to include one of the poems I wrote during that time. I have also 'borrowed' a poem, quite deliberately I now realise, for its distancing effect. There is a particular trajectory I am seeking away from the action at the end. But in describing my experience of the sun rise I opted for a narrative approach although I did also, at the time, attempt two or three times to capture my observations and feelings in poetic form. I suppose I am in search of a poetic approach to narrative at such moments of trying to convey both the sensibility of the observed event and the emotions it engenders.

And a couple of comments on content:-

In an earlier reflection I noted that the quality of myth that I have tried to convey has a certain frozen quality, it stops the action at a particular moment in time. This has the tendency to capture, too, the emotional resonance at that moment. In this way the mythical aspect serves both to reduce and inflate the story.

I used another word in my introductory section, not myth but epiphany. The two events I have chosen to include in this form, my father's death and meeting Donna at the sunrise, have a clear epiphanic quality for me, by which I mean that they inform my sense of spiritual connection. They are both love stories. And through love, I feel, I have connected with a world beyond the ordinary. My experience of re-living my witnessing of my father's death gave me a certain connection with a psychic, daemonic world, which is for me a profound, if difficult, form of knowing. I have named this as psychic knowing.

And my experience of seeing the sun rise, conditioned as I was by the many coincidences which led to that particular moment, confirmed my emerging perception for a cosmic spirituality. I have tried to capture my sense of this way of knowing through the term poetic wisdom.

This is my deliberate attempt to embrace the inflationary aspect of myth to represent my particular 'certainty.'

But there is a nagging concern for the reductive aspect of freeze-framing myth. For neither Donna nor my father are adequately represented by these snapshot accounts. They are bigger, wider, deeper, more complex characters than the mythologising process allows for. But the truth is that this is an account of my inquiry in which I have to select particular aspects as they informed me along the way. And the truth is that they both maintain this mythical dimension for me. I choose to continue to see them in mythical as well as human terms.

And part of the content issue is to know how to convey the conjunction of the psychic and spiritual dimensions that I have chosen to describe as epiphanic along with the human love stories that informed or enabled this aspect to form. I do not know how the interaction worked and have tried to include the two aspects in the kind of relation to one another that they hold for me. This is a clear case for representation, in my view, rather than explanation.

A final paragraph.

I know that the sun spoke to me that morning. Now I greet it more appreciatively. It is a ridiculous suggestion, of course, in a material and rational universe. But in the parallel universe of soul connection I know that I am known. I am both inflated and diminished in the sight of the sun. I am vital, alive and I am a mere speck of dust in the blinking of an eye.

And an Introduction to The Sick Child.

I learned, in a very direct way that morning, of the life giving properties of light. I saw the sun differently and learned to see differently as a consequence. But as well as being interested in seeing differently I am also learning to hear differently. I am learning not to be cut off from my surrounding world. I have quoted David Abrams at some length in this chapter already, and I want to include one more passage of his, for his hope was, “*by writing these pages to begin to recall and reestablish the rootedness of human awareness in the larger ecology.*” (Abrams 1996: p.261)

In a coda he calls “Turning Inside Out,” he suggests that he has:-

“disclosed the subtle dependence of various “interior,” mental phenomena upon certain easily overlooked or taken-for-granted aspects of the surrounding sensuous world. Language was disclosed as a profoundly bodily phenomenon, sustained by the gestures and sounds of the animate landscape. The rational intellect so prized in the West was shown to rely upon the external, visible letters of the alphabet. The presumably interior, mental awareness of the “past” and the “future” was shown to be dependent upon our sensory experience of that which is hidden beneath the ground and concealed beyond the horizon. Finally the experience of awareness itself was related to mysteries of the breath and the air, to the tangible but invisible atmosphere in which we find ourselves immersed.”

(ibid: pp..261-2)

In a way I see myself turning myself Inside Out but also Outside In, in the conjunction I call The Imagination, a theatre of growing awareness.

Noel Cobb linked Munch's visual work to the poetry of Rilke. Abrams chooses a Rilke poem to introduce his coda. I offer it to you to inform your viewing of Munch's awakening vision at his sister's bedside:

*"Ah, not to be cut off,
not through the slightest partition
shut out from the law of the stars.
The inner – what is it?
if not intensified sky,
hurled through with birds and deep
with the winds of homecoming."*

(Rainer Maria Rilke)



A DIALECTIC THOU - REFLECTION AND EXPRESSION THROUGH ART AND MUSIC

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Robin has been arguing, in considering aspects of the presentational in his thesis so far, about the limitations of language, especially in its written, or literal form. In this he has been engaged in a further aspect of the dialectic with which he opens his account between expressive and explanatory forms of discourse. The similarity reflects itself in a privileging of visual imagery, music and poetry, in Robin's hierarchy of expressive forms, over narrative writing. He has commented on the paradoxical nature of this belief as an emergent or potential writer.

Robin's intention in writing this final chapter in What He Knows is to validate his appreciation for both Art and Music as vital means of expression which, for him, lead most directly to a kind of knowing which he has previously named as poetic wisdom.

The reader is invited to notice a progression from the previous chapter on story-telling, in which Robin attempted to express his insight into poetic wisdom through a written 'poetic narrative,' to his account of the significance for him of musical and artistic expression as complements to, rather than in opposition or contrast to, writing.

This chapter maintains Robin's overall intention for the Section which is to present, essentially, his 'inner knowing.' He refers briefly to the way in which artistic images and pieces of music figure in his 'outer expression' in, for instance his teaching practice as well as in this thesis.

Robin adopts a rather similar framing process as in the previous chapter. The first section is a brief **Philosophical Recapitulation** in which he refers particularly to Schopenhauer as an inspiration.

The second section, **An Intuitive Regard for Music and Image**, develops his theme from a psychological perspective, particularly based on Jung's typology.

Robin then introduces the picture he has selected as a guiding **image** across the whole of his thesis, "Spirit of the Waters", by Odilon Redon. He chooses as a **musical** accompaniment the "Ghost Trio" by Beethoven, previously mentioned in the prior chapter.

CHAPTER 7 - REFLECTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS THROUGH ART AND MUSIC

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Introduction.

I have referred on occasions to what I consider to be the limitations of writing. I have argued for my inclusion of a cd of musical extracts and a number of art images interspersing my text. This is a real puzzle and a challenge for me as an aspirant writer.

Writing is necessarily linear in the sense that one word, or idea follows, or precedes another. They are separated. But this is not my experience of how ideas form.

I know that when I take a walk, for instance, just enjoying the physical sensations of my body and the connecting countryside, often a constellation of ideas, a cluster or connection of ideas, will somehow seek attention. In those first few moments I perceive a whole, in the same way that I am a part of the place in which I walk and my thinking head is connected to my perceiving body. My eyes and ears and nose, my feet and my hands all convey impressions which simultaneously add up to my experience. I can choose to separate them out if I wish, by concentrating my attention on one or another, but that is not how my 'natural,' instinctive process works, it takes in the whole.

Anthony Storr captures something of the falsity I experience in trying to capture thought processes in his account of "Music and the Mind." In a passage I enjoy he suggests:

"Although we may describe what goes on in our own minds as continuous, the 'stream of consciousness,' we cannot actually perceive this. It is more like a stream of unconsciousness, with elements we call conscious floating like occasional twigs on the surface of the stream. When something occurs to us, a new thought, a linking of perceptions, an idea, we take pains to isolate it, to make it actual by putting it into words, writing it down, stopping the 'flow' of mental activity for the time being as we might reach out and grab one of the twigs floating past.

We like to describe the processes of thought as continuous, as a 'train of thought' inexorably proceeding by logical steps to a new conclusion. Yet, what many thinkers describe is more like floundering about in a slough of perplexity, a jumble of incoherence, relieved by occasional flashes of illumination when a new pattern suddenly emerges. Ordered, coherent progression of thought is a retrospective falsification of what actually happens."

(Storr 1992: p. 174)

Similarly, if I am to convey the flood of ideas that arise for me, when I walk for example, I have to separate them out and sequence them in some way which might make sense, but in doing so loses the spontaneous combustion of the whole, their natural combination.

This is the limitation I am referring to although I am learning to appreciate, as my thesis draws to its conclusion, this retrospective grabbing of twigs and ordering them into a coherent programme of thought.

But I am also in search of a way of expressing, or appreciating, some quality in the 'slough of perplexity' which is itself a form of knowing.

I have found some consolation in the admittedly pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer to support an initial contention that art, and especially music, have a more direct connection with my experience of being, in this incoherent yet real sense, than writing.

A Philosophical Recapitulation.

In my earlier Philosophical Reflection I referred to my appreciation for the distinction in Kant's philosophical scheme between the phenomenal and the noumenal. In my understanding Schopenhauer extends this idea into the notion that there is an ultimate reality which is a unity – the *unus mundus* of mediaeval philosophy, which is both beyond our human categories of space, time and causality and also beyond the Cartesian division into physical and mental.

While both Kant and Schopenhauer thought that this underlying reality was inaccessible, Schopenhauer considered that one type of experience brings us closer to the underlying noumena than any other. He suggested that we have a direct knowledge from inside our own bodies which is unlike the perception we have of anything else.

David Pears describes this notion:-

“At the basis of Schopenhauer’s system there is a thesis in speculative metaphysics: we do have a resource which allows us to discern the nature of the reality behind the phenomenal world; we have our experience of our own agency. According to Schopenhauer, when we act, our knowledge of our own agency is neither scientific nor the result of any other kind of discursive operation of the intellect. It is direct, intuitive, inside knowledge of our own strivings, and he believed that it gives us our only glimpse of the true nature of reality.”

(Pears 1987: p. 5)

In Schopenhauer’s scheme of things, this inner knowledge is the nearest we get to perception of the Will, the driving force or energy underlying everything of which individuals are but manifestations. For, in his view, outer expressions as in bodily movements are the phenomenal expression of that irrational, inexplicable, underlying striving toward existence which he called the Will. Nietzsche’s Will to Power is a derivative of Schopenhauer’s notion.

I do not have to ascribe to the precise ‘truth’ of this progressive scheme, through Kant, Schopenhauer and into Nietzsche’s thought, in order to appreciate it. For appreciate it I do, as an intellectual construct which seems to describe some profound aspect of my experience of being, especially the relation between inner and outer aspects of knowing which are such a central element of my thesis. And I am striving to elicit an aesthetic way of perceiving as the route inwards to the incoherent ‘poetic wisdom’ that I believe resides in the stream of Storr’s metaphor rather than in the extracted twigs.

Schopenhauer considered the ‘aesthetic way of knowing’ as an exercise in empathy and the only way to glimpse the inner nature of the world. In his view the function of the arts is not to depict particular instances of reality, but to represent the universals which lie behind the particular. In this respect his philosophical scheme returns to Plato’s theory of Ideas. Art, he wrote:-

“repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding element in all the phenomena of the world. According to the material in which it repeats, it is sculpture, painting, poetry, or music. Its only source is knowledge of the Ideas; its sole aim is communication of this knowledge.”

(Schopenhauer quoted in Storr 1993: p.136)

At some point this particular scheme of universal Ideas being expressed through the purity of great art and contemplated by a particular process of aesthetic perception becomes too rarefied an intellectual construct to continue to resonate with the experience of knowing I am trying to express. However, I do appreciate the fundamental distinctions in the kinds of knowing being expressed as, for example, between phenomena and noumena, and the different forms of perception appropriate for their apprehension.

Art works and music work for me, I believe, when they are informed to some degree by a universal force, a cosmic Will, maybe, but also infused with the messy, emotional passions of human experience. And I like to imagine myself apprehending them in this way, too, at many levels.

I would like to go on to construct the second ‘pillar’ of this particular framework which transfers from the philosophical to the psychological and the work, in particular, of Jung.

A Psychological Reflection.

Jung had a similar view of Archetypes as Schopenhauer thought of Platonic Ideas. Archetypes in Jung’s view are primordial images which manifest themselves particularly in creative phantasy:

“there are present in every psyche forms which are unconscious but nonetheless active – living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that preform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions.”

(Jung 1968: p. 79)

The notion of Archetypes, despite this similarity to the notion of Ideas, has the resonance for me that I find expressed and appreciate especially in music and visual art. There is an overlap with the mythical domain I was referring to in my chapter on storytelling which Jung also seemed to locate in his distinction between the gods Apollo and Dionysus. There is a link here, too, with Nietzsche, who acts for me as a kind of fulcrum between the philosophical and psychological domains.

Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, portrays Apollo as the deity of light who presides over the inner world of phantasy and dream. He is the god of order, measure, number, control, and the subjugation of unruly instinct. Dionysus, in contrast, is the god of liberation, of intoxication, of unbridled licence, and of orgiastic celebration. I

find this shift into human complexity and passion, and tension, more recognisable than the abstraction of Ideas.

Jung takes the distinction in a different direction in which the Apollonian state is one of introversion in which the subject contemplates the dream world of eternal ideas. This is close to Schopenhauer's aesthetic way of knowing. The Dionysian state is one of extraversion, of physical participation in the external world through feeling and sensation. This is one crucial aspect of Jung's theory of Psychological Types which speaks to my constant distinction between inner and outer.

But there is another aspect to his theory which I understand from my training as psychotherapist and developer that we perceive differently. I am encouraged to think about different preferences by, for example, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a psychometric instrument much used in management education which is based on Jung's theory of types. In this particular context the theory suggests that some people will prefer to perceive in a 'sensing' mode which is a detailed and accurate absorption of data, whereas those people with an 'intuitive' preference will more naturally look for connections and patterns and possibilities.

Images seem to me to work from the general, the whole towards the particular and then back again. As I stand, typically, in front of a picture for the first time, I am at first struck by the whole of the composition. Then as I gaze into it further I might search around for particular 'moments', as it were, sections of the puzzle. I might also take in something of the crafting by which the picture has been composed. Satisfied with the more particular observations I will step back, once again, to re-view the whole, maybe refreshed and more thoroughly informed by the more detailed account. This is analogous to my experience of learning. I take in the whole so that I can understand the location and connections between the particulars.

Poetry seems to have a different quality. In the curious pattern of words that poetry allows, a different quality of image is formed in my experience, more diffuse in a way, although particular moments may be quite clear. Poetry seems to me to convey words into images which can make meaning without making sense. But poems somehow work for me from the particular towards the general. I take in words and phrases, first, and then begin to discern the pattern they form. I am then tempted back into a review of the particulars informed by the whole.

In relating my own experience I may simply be validating my own Type preferences as an introverted intuitive, in MBTI terms. So, according to Jung's theory I am more likely to want to start from the whole view, to take in the pattern before

considering the details. This seems to work for me with images but I have a different experience with poetry. My conjecture is that the form itself requires a certain level of detailed appreciation for the words before being able to discern the patterns they form and the image they create.

I am curious about the effect of music, for it has a similar linear and progressive quality as narrative writing, although there may be many 'voices' at one time. It conjures up something of another favourite image or metaphor for me, which is weaving. In my experience, music conveys a different quality of message and meaning. It is, like poetry, less precise, more open to ambiguity and different 'interpretation'.

Storr, in his final chapter on The Significance of Music, makes the point that *"music exists in time, but that we can think of time only in terms of space. In time, there is no right and left, up and down; there is only before and after. But if we want to think about before and after, we have to provide a spatial analogue. We are so constituted that we cannot do otherwise."* And he quotes Bergson:-

"When we listen to a melody we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have – an impression as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity – and yet it is the very continuity of the melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which make that impression upon us. If we cut it up into distinct notes, into so many 'befores' and 'afters,' we are bringing spatial images into it and impregnating the succession with simultaneity: in space, and only in space, is there a clear distinction of parts external to one another."

(Storr 1992: p. 173)

As a writer I know that I am trying to replicate that sense of flow, of simultaneity, in the particular quality with which I put the words together. But my interest for the moment is in the relation of these spatial and temporal aspects of visual art and music, for I have been experimenting with their combination throughout the period of my inquiry as teacher, and have been asking you to experience the power I believe the combination has to access the level of Archetypes or Ideas, the universal knowing which lies behind both Schopenhauer and Jung's schemata.

One possibility suggested by the notion of Type and our different preferences is that the combination provides both inner to outer, sensing to intuition and outer to inner, intuition to sensing, modes of appreciation.

Another view, derived from Storr's suggestion is that in contemplating a work of visual art in combination with listening to a piece of music we are simultaneously exercising our temporal and spatial faculties.

My interest is that in general, from my own personal experience and from feedback I have from students, is that the combination often offers a new or refreshed apprehension.

I have a similar experience with reading poetry aloud. Very often I am tempted, or asked, to read twice. I understand that the poet Robert Bly invariably does so, often accompanying his second reading with an accompaniment on the guitar. In this regard he replicates Ficino's practice, which was to recite poetry, apparently, accompanied by the lute.

A similar explanation exists in the theory of type, that listeners make sense of the poem differently, but in the process of both hearings perceive both the sensing particulars and the intuitive whole.

My inquiry into presentational form, as teacher and writer, continues. I know that as a writer I want to find ways of reaching both the gods, Dionysus and Apollo. My notion is that I have to craft, somehow, ways with words which conjure images while also flowing, which act in both temporal and spatial dimensions. I want to appeal to all Types, in Jungian terms, offering pattern to intuitives and detail to sensors.

And I know that in moments of contemplation, in my inquiry into knowing, as I settle to an extended viewing accompanied by an uninterrupted listening, I am often visited by these different functions in conjunction. My inner resources are opened up and my Will is exercised.

I want to turn now to the particular image I have chosen as a Guidance over my thesis and which appears in the Introductory Section.

Guardian Spirit of the Waters.

I want to end this chapter with a re-view of the image I have selected as a frontispiece for this entire project.

I like the idea of a personal ghost, or daemon, negotiating between the worlds of spirit and matter, communicating with my soul. I discovered this notion of a daemon figure from Geoffrey Cornelius who appeared in the first section as my guide to horary astrology. A daemon is somehow located in a world between matter and spirit. A

daemon is not as serious as a god. Daemons have more 'human' qualities. They are mediators, negotiators.

I keep a copy of "Guardian Spirit of the Waters", by Odilon Redon, on the wall of my den. He watches over me there as he presides over this works, as Guardian.

But why this particular image?

At first, of course, because it spoke to me in some way, in the way that I have suggested images do. But subsequently I have worked at what some of his significance for me might be.

In their chapter, "Taking Wing, 1870-1878", Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zegers note: *"When the image of the winged head reappears it hovers like a cloud, here presiding benevolently over a human presence, in the form of a boat whose journey over deep waters is a metaphor of life."*

(Druick 1995: p. 103)

As well as locating him on a convenient wall I often take this picture with me, particularly when I am going to teach groups about my notions of "life leadership", whether that be in the form of AMOC inquiry or MBA millennial leadership, precisely as a benevolent spirit or daemon. The picture contains three elements which speak to me particularly.

1. The eye which sees.

It was not until a discussion in my supervision group that I noticed the particular significance of the single eye, as it happens the right eye, for the left one is pretty much shrouded. I have lived all my life with, effectively, the use of only one eye, my right eye. My left one has always been 'lazy', it distinguishes light, to some extent, but not shape.

As I mentioned in the chapter The Imagination I have a particular attachment to 'seeing' as in perspectivism, a particular aspect of post-modernism, and seeing differently as an expression of learning.

I am also inclined to use the word vision, as an aspect of leadership, in the sense of 'seeing clearly.' This is one of my main concerns, to help people I work with raise their level of awareness, to see themselves and their situation clearly.

As I now re-visit this aspect of my work, this theme which has informed me for, perhaps, a decade now, I am fascinated to note as I turn to the dictionary for guidance, that the prime definition of vision is: *"a person or thing which is apparently perceived otherwise than by ordinary sight; esp. an apparition of a prophetic, revelational, or*

supernatural nature - - - - - and - - - - a distinct or vivid mental image or concept, an excursion into the imagination." (ref OED).

I can imagine my daemon, the Guardian Spirit of the Waters, guiding me towards the sunrise, gazing at me in that spirit of compassion as I finally see, a revelation of nature with a prophetic quality. In that moment I saw differently and saw something, the sun rising, differently as a consequence.

2. The voyage of life.

For Redon it was impossible to see a ship purely as a motif; there was always a spiritual meaning involved. I think I have a rather similar sense when I see my life as a sea voyage, as compared to a journey over land. Both are significant in the common sense of journeying, my life as a journey. On land I feel relatively secure, with my feet on the ground, somewhat in control of my destiny. Whereas in a boat I am thoroughly conscious of the forces of nature, an otherworld of which I am in awe, scared and excited. In a quite practical way I am gradually teaching myself to sail regularly, to build my confidence that I can, indeed, negotiate wind and tide and enjoy the sensation of being at one with nature, rather than at her mercy.

It seems that at the time Redon created "Guardian Spirit of the Waters" he had a particular voyage in mind, which resonates with my own sense of a watery voyage which somehow "goes back", to a more instinctual state of knowledge, a wisdom based on an appreciation of not knowing, somehow. The particular voyage in Redon's case was the short story he started to write, "Le Recit de Marthe la Folie" or "The Account of Mad Marthe". There are two particular aspects of the story which seem relevant. One is that the voyage Marthe takes, with her father, is back to "*the vast solitudes of Creole lands,*" where mores are simpler and life freer than in France and where relationships are characterised by "*good instinct*" and "*a gentle humility that resonates deeply with true feelings.*"

But the voyage turns rough, the vessel is seized by "*an unconscious and howling sea*", a squall that forces the passengers to abandon ship and then turns over the life boats. The story goes on to tell of Marthe awakening from unconsciousness, being tended by a gorilla in the forest, both tender and ferocious according to Marthe's own state of mind.

(Quotations taken from *ibid*: p. 103-4.)

I am selecting these two aspects of the story which give it a 'mythical' quality, the sense of a return to a state of connectedness and an explanatory quality, perhaps

rather simplistically in this case, of a young woman learning of her unconscious impulses. But, as you will know from my earlier description of the Turner image of the boat voyaging between headlands into the rays of the sun rising at dawn, "The sunrise, a boat between headlands", also has a quality for me which takes it beyond "seeing something" into the process of "seeing" itself, or how I see.

Indeed there is a connection between the three pictures, the two Turners and the Redon, for in each there is a suggestion of an horizon beyond which is nothing but light. This is, I am sure, archetypal stuff, appealing to an instinctual level of knowing that may benefit from some degree of explanation, from an appreciation of what significance I can deduce, but is beyond that rational, explanatory possibility. Its power lies, precisely, in the unknowingness, that which is beyond sight.

3. Compassion and Melancholy.

The third aspect of significance I want to draw attention to is the quality of the gaze. I have been quite surprised, on the occasions I have shown this picture to others, about a marked split between those who see in the eye's gaze a compassionate quality compared to those who see a malevolent one.

My feeling towards the picture, somehow gazing back in through the eye towards the hand of Redon and his feelings, is of a fellow feeling, of confusion, sadness, maybe, a certain melancholy, perhaps, but there is a brightness in the eye's gaze mirrored in the parted lips of a sensual compassion, an understanding.

"Compassion - Participation in another's suffering; Pity inclining one to show mercy or give aid." (Ref OED)

This is a third, crucial component in my appreciation for what I bring into interaction with people in the world, from out of my own well spring of love and anguish. This is the gift I describe in my first epiphanic story, the loss of my father.

I can easily imagine my father's eye in Redon's image. He, too, had little sight in his left eye. I can imagine his pleasure at my decision to work at this material through my PhD and to bring it out into the light of day in my practice.

Musical extract

I have included a piece on the cd which 'speaks' to the Redon image for me. It is another extract from Beethoven's work, the slow movement from his trio known as the Ghost trio.

I mentioned listening repeatedly to this work during my retreat at Schumacher, before I saw the sun rise. I sense that Beethoven's ghost knows my daemon. He knows despair and hope. He communicates across time and space in the extraordinary conversation which takes place between and in between the three instruments.

Beethoven is supposed to have conceived his music in images. He often referred to himself, apparently, as 'Tondichter', or sound poet, rather than the usual word for musician which is 'Tonkustler.'

I offer you, then, an historical recording by the tragically young newly wedded Jacqueline du Pre and Daniel Barenboim with their friend Pinchas Zukerman in extraordinary conversation.

INTERLUDE 3 - THE ARTIST AND HIS WIFE

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I want to convey something of who I am becoming at this stage of my project.

I suggested an image of myself as raw-searcher entering my re-search phase as 'apprentice alchemist' captured in the image of Kahn's self portrait.

I have a sense that the alchemical process has been working over these five or six years in a gentler way, perhaps, but no less transformational for that. I now describe myself as 'grown up,' adult, I suppose.

I am secure in my Devon cottage surrounded by the familiar hills and valleys of the South Hams, bounded by the sea. I am content for the time being with my various practices as consultant, coach and teacher. My novel awaits the completion of this writing task, with the promise of a sustained period of creative writing, along with further revision, to come. I am about to celebrate seven years into what feels like a sustaining and validating partnership with Donna. I am extending my community participation and leadership at Dartington and settling amongst small groups of folk who meditate with the sun, celebrate creation spirituality, are active ecologists and sail the local waters.

The image I have selected to represent this present state is by Cecil Collins. It portrays him with his wife sat in the window of Swan Cottage near Totnes, close to the river Dart, "The Artist and His Wife," 1939.

William Anderson describes this picture as the first fruits of Collins's realisation that "*what he most valued in himself was his childlike heart, and that the true purpose of his keen analytical mind was to defend his heart, not to betray it.*" (Anderson 1988: p. 51.)

The picture is a celebration of his marriage to Elizabeth after eight years and it also concerns, in Anderson's view, the reconciliation of the inner side of human nature with the outer side. In this respect it seems an entirely fitting image to accompany the conclusion to my section on inner knowing and the transition towards its outer manifestation in my practice.

I was also delighted to discover that Collins, who was a resident artist at Dartington for a productive period, is wearing a green suit he had made from cloth woven in Scotland and coloured green with vegetable dyes. It suggests a veritable, woven 'Green Man.'

I aspire to wear the suit. This is both a symbol of a way to live and a way to work, for me.



The Artist and his Wife 1939 (15)

SECTION 4

WHAT DO I DO

A DIALECTIC THOU - WHAT I DO

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Introduction.

Robin's intention in this fourth section is to portray, as best he can, how his practice has manifested itself as a consequence of his period of research. There is a clear shift in emphasis from the inner quality of How He Knows to its external expression in What He Does. In this respect the section represents the third 'leg' of his Bumpy Learning Wheel.

Robin has chosen to include three aspects of his practice:-

> Teaching Practice –

Robin has settled on teaching as the main professional practice which he has developed during this period of research. Although he continues to consult to business organisations and coach leaders within them, he has chosen to focus his inquiry on learning, both as it applies to him and his 'learning to lead his life well,' and to the way he teaches.

Robin's continuing teaching practice is now limited to the Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting and he has included a section, **Teaching Practice**, based on one of the modules he offers on that programme.

As Robin acknowledged in the previous section, What I Know, he learned considerably through teaching on the MBA programme at Cranfield Business School an elective course called Leading into the Millenium. He shared the teaching on this course with Donna Ladkin and learned much by way of practical skill from her. Together they wrote a Case Pack of six essays to accompany the sessions. Robin has selected one of the three essays he wrote, **The Aesthetic Perspective** as an insight into the kind of material he was introducing to the students on this course over the three years they ran it.

> Writing Practice -

Although Robin has suggested that writing remains more of an aspiration as a professional practice, he has focused much of this thesis on writing, and latterly the particular craft aspect of revising. His initial interest in the ‘presentational’ as a form of knowing was in its expressive manifestation. He subsequently realised that writing had become much more of an internalised process as a significant element of his method.

But he has been writing, in the sense that he would like to become recognised as a writer – of creative fiction and related articles. In this respect he has included two relatively short pieces.

The first is an article for the journal *Green Spirit*, which represents the Creation Spirituality community in the UK. The article is called **The Way of Beauty** and will be a recognisable precis of the essay *The Aesthetic Perspective*.

The second piece that Robin has selected is an extract from *Ham Stone*, his novel in progress. The particular section is about perception, which featured so clearly in the previous section *What I Know*. He has called it, for the purpose of this thesis, **Seeing Blue**.

> Living Practice –

Robin has named an aspect of his thesis as ‘Learning to Live My Life Well.’ His emphasis has been on learning. In particular he has been inquiring into how his learning leads to making choices out of a full awareness of outer and inner – that collision about which he wrote in the chapter on the Imagination.

But it seems appropriate to Robin that he should comment on the Living aspect as well. The way he has chosen to address this element is to go back to a piece he drafted early on in his inquiry, **Ithaka**, as a reflection of the ‘attentional phrases’ he was developing as ‘touch-stones’ for his life practice. He has reviewed this piece in his process of revision and presents an account of how he feels he is doing, or being.

A commentary on how you might approach the section.

Robin recognises that there is considerable duplication between the ‘knowing’ he presented in the previous section and the propositions he includes in a number of these pieces. This is inevitable given that the process Robin is presenting is essentially the external expression of internal knowing.

This duplication is particularly true of the chapter *The Aesthetic Perspective* and the article *The Way of Beauty*. Both of these are extensions of the ideas he previously presented in *The Imagination* in section 3. The difference is that he is advocating a particular view about art for an audience, and it is this aspect he would wish for you to apprehend. You might, therefore, choose to scan these chapters with an intention of seeing the process of expression at work, rather than concern yourself with the content in detail.

Teaching Practice also offers some material previously discussed in *Philosophical Reflection* in the previous section. Again Robin’s concern is to present how he attempts to convey his ideas. As the *Dialectic Thou* to that chapter will suggest, Robin has attempted in his presentation of a teaching session to engage you in his process of review and reflection as well as a participant in the session.

Seeing Blue, as previously mentioned, is an attempt to convey Robin’s notion of perspectivism, a philosophical idea, in a creative way. This is an example of much of the intention of *Ham Stone*, which is to create a fictional medium for the expression of ideas, many of which, such as the process of horary astrology, are included in this thesis. Robin hopes that your reading of this short extract will be a pleasure!

Ithaka is a more troubled piece which leads into the final reflection, an Epilogue, which closes Robin’s thesis. A significant element of Robin’s learning, for which he has used the phrase ‘growing up,’ is about his growth in confidence that he can express *Who He Is* and *What He Knows* as teacher and writer. In the combination of these two sections Robin reflects on the way his sense of confidence shifts in both aspects as he continues to challenge his ‘life practice’ and repeats his ‘adolescent’ anxiety about his knowing in an ‘academic’ sense.

Clearly one of the issues in a ‘life inquiry’ is when and how to complete. There is bound to be some degree of arbitrary choice in this respect as Robin’s inquiry continues as it has shifted over the course of his revision. Robin will return to this issue in his Epilogue.

A DIALECTIC THOU - TEACHING PRACTICE

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Introduction.

Robin has chosen to present as an example of his practice as teacher a session he has run on a number of occasions on AMOC, the Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting. In this Dialectic Thou Robin introduces the contextual frame for the session and a reflection on his intention for its presentation.

Contextual Frame.

The Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting is a two year, part time Masters degree programme. The programme is run by practising consultants invited by the course Director, Bill Critchley, from the full time and associate consultants within the Ashridge Consulting Group. The programme is advertised as a 'programme for the practice development of organisation consultants run by consultants.' The academic degree is awarded by Middlesex University.

Three of the four semesters are 'taught' in the sense that participants attend a series of three day workshops at Ashridge which are typically designed with a mixture of presentations, experiential learning sessions and reflective dialogue. Interspersed with these workshops participants also take part in one day Consulting Application Groups, facilitated by a member of faculty, which are intended to provide a forum for the application of learning within their own work organisations. These groups are run, therefore, as Action Learning Sets.

During these three semesters participants write a series of assignments which are assessed, in different combinations, by faculty and peers. Each participant has recourse to a Tutor for support in this respect.

The fourth semester is set aside for a dissertation, the writing up of an action inquiry relating the participants learning about themselves in the context of an organisational

setting. Robin has been a member of faculty since AMOC's inception. It is now, in early 2002, at the point where the fifth group are entering their second semester and the fourth group are in the process of their dissertation. Three groups have completed. Each group averages about eighteen participants.

Robin's particular contribution has been in the design and delivery of two workshops. Workshop 3, which is the one he has selected for this presentation, is called Inquiring and Individual Learning. It is the concluding workshop in the first semester. The second workshop he has mainly contributed to is on Forms of Inquiry which acts as a bridge between the third, taught semester, and the final dissertation phase. Robin has also acted as CAG Facilitator and Tutor with different groups, leading the supervision group on the first three programmes.

Typically faculty prepare and teach workshops in pairs. Robin has worked on this workshop with all five groups to date with a different partner on each occasion. It has become recognised, within the faculty therefore, as 'his' workshop.

Presentation Framing.

Robin is continuing to experiment in this chapter with methods of presentation which convey an essentially sensible, particularly, aural dimension. He argues that the effectiveness of his teaching practice is intimately connected to the way he says what he says and the setting in which he says it. In this sense his practice as teacher is presented as an integral expression of Who He Is and What He Knows. And as a significant aspect of What He Knows is the significance of The Imagination, and the theatrical aspect of the 'arena of contention,' of which he wrote in section 3, the way in which Robin presents his session is intended to convey some element of theatricality. (Robin notes that this is another term which seems to have gained a perjorative connotation, as false or 'overblown.' Robin prefers to see theatre, and some element of ritual, as an integral aspect of the craft of teaching.)

The chapter operates on a number of parallel levels, therefore. It is trying to present a teaching session, its preparation, presentation and the experiential exercise involved, in a way which is congruent with what he actually does. Clearly narrative form is limited in this aspiration, especially as we expect written presentation to be more precise in its delivery than an oral discussion.

Robin also tries to include the way his reflexive process works both in the moment and in reviewing and re-considering his material and the way he puts it across. In this respect he is reflecting on What He Knows, Who He Is and the skill or craft with which he expresses these 'in the moment.'

In practice Robin has separated out some of these elements rather than trying to run them in parallel for a session which typically runs for half a day. His oral presentation, alone, runs for well over an hour. Reading a transcript of his recording of this would, Robin considers, be an inappropriate request of his reader!

You are invited, therefore, to attend Robin's Teaching Practice in three roles:-

- You continue, of course, to be a reader and judge of his thesis, in which role you are presumably engaged at all the levels Robin has identified.
- You are invited to engage as participant in that part of Robin's session he has included in its transcript form, along with his descriptions of the setting he created.
- You might like to consider yourself a colleague engaged in some of the review that Robin has included.

Robin hopes that you are willing to participate in his experimental process of presentation which includes some of the aspects of Story Telling he discussed in the previous section.

CHAPTER 8 - TEACHING PRACTICE

1st draft January 2000.

2nd draft April 2001

3rd draft February 2002

4th draft May 2002

Some Introductory Remarks.

I want to try and reproduce a teaching session on the page.

The session I have chosen is workshop 3, Inquiring and Learning, for AMOC 3 in December 1999. My co-tutor is Adrian McLean. The first day of the workshop, which is largely represented by the material in this presentation, is essentially similar to a day I had run on two previous and have since on two further occasions. The other two days have been re-designed over the period along with the contributions of different colleagues. This session takes place on the first day of this third workshop and the overall setting is the house and gardens of Ashridge.

My choice of this particular version, version three, as it were, of the workshop is determined by the work that I put into writing it up in January 2000, supported as I was by a tape recording of the first half of my oral presentation. It is very particular, in this sense, a representation of one particular teaching session at a point in time in my inquiry when I was learning to appreciate the possibility of developing my professional practice as teacher. I had modified, considerably, what I said and how I said it from reflections on the two previous 'outings' and have done so since in Decembers 2000 and 2001.

As mentioned in the Dialectic Thou which frames this chapter I am inviting you to participate in three potential roles.

> (I will continue to address you as reader in the established format of blue set within brackets. My intention will be to comment on choices I am making in both content and form in relation to this as a piece of writing set within my thesis. In this respect I want to be clear that my intention here is to reflect on my learning in becoming teacher. My concern is with how I am crafting congruence between what I am trying to convey, my advocacy, and how I am conveying it. The content will be largely familiar from previous sections).

> I will review with you as potential colleague my reflections in the moment and subsequently. In practice Adrian and I will have done this on the basis that I set out in my notes on preparation. One of the benefits of working within the AMOC faculty, and more broadly within ACL, is the expectation of constantly learning through review, an action learning philosophy in practice. In this respect I will be trying to replicate the sense I make as practising teacher of what I am doing and how it is going. In the context of AMOC, a programme for practitioners, we conduct some of this 'review in the moment' with the group as exemplifying the kind of action learning we espouse.

I am trying out this form as a way of capturing the immediate and subsequent reflexive process, as a developing teacher. In this I am trying to make a distinction between an immediate level of reflection in my practice from a more distanced level of reflection as inquirer. I will use this alternative colour for this purpose.

> I invite you to participate in the session, or at least a portion of it. I will try and replicate "*what I said*" and how I said it, using the established conventions of "*italics in quotes*" and regular type.

The Setting.

You arrive at a suite of rooms set within one side of the quadrangle. The first space you enter is set out as a 'coffee lounge' with a few tables and chairs around the room, coffee, tea, water and fruit juices available along with bowls of fruit and croissants. You mingle along with other participants, catching up with each other on events since you last met. Robin and Adrian join you in this process.

How do you find this initial gathering? I realise that I do not feel particularly 'natural,' feeling some difference between us as tutors and the participants. We are trying, it seems to me, to tread a line between being co-learners as practitioners and teachers. In practice I choose to talk in particular about the pre-reading which gives me valuable data about how to pitch my delivery and some personal connections to use during the session to generate discussion.

You notice the room in which the workshop is going to take place through windows set into the intervening wall. Your notice is attracted by the sound of music playing. Robin and Adrian encourage you to enter and you appreciate the space, which seems round in shape and spacious. This is emphasised by the familiar circle of chairs which is set under a

roof light. Round the walls are spotlights picking out flip charts and tables with coloured papers, coloured pencils, crayons and paints on them. In front of you as you enter there is a flip chart stand with a picture on it and beside that a table with cd player, assorted cds and a large bowl of flowers. There is another table to the side set out with a collection of books.

The music you hear is a song by Mike Scott, "Bring 'em all in."

The chorus is repetitive:-

*"Bring 'em all in, Bring 'em all in, bring 'em all in
Bring 'em all in, Bring 'em all into my heart
Bring 'em all in, Bring 'em all in, Bring 'em all in
Bring 'em all in, Bring 'em all into my heart."*

(I have included the song on the cd in case you want to get into the mood.)

Is this appropriate or elaborate, the setting? I am interested to try for an approach which is provocative in the sense of seductive. I want to soften the boundary between 'domestic' and 'work' in the interests of encouraging an arena of learning which is on the boundary between the personal and the professional. I want to appeal to the senses as well as the intellect. Where are the boundaries to be drawn in this aspect, I wonder, with you, and to myself. As I enter the 'theatre' I have created, carefully booking this particular suite of rooms and setting it out in the way I have described, I try to imagine how a participant will see it and recognise, of course, that each will see it, and feel it, differently. I attend to my nerves jangling away, but am reassured by (Adrian's) presence and the preparations we have discussed for starting the session, as well as the fact that we have agreed on the setting and its purpose. I appreciate the sense of being in partnership we share.

Adrian opens the 'formal' session.

- He talks about the overall purpose of the workshop and its design.
- He is clear that we will pursuing some of the ideas we introduced at the first workshop in more depth, working with the ideas set out in the readings.
- In a way, he suggests, this is an opportunity to dig into the philosophical under-pinnings of the programme – its paradigm, maybe – both as an intellectual inquiry but also as an experiential learning.
- He describes the first day as essentially devoted to a personal inquiry which establishes a process we will use for an organisational inquiry on day two.

He then requests that you join in a number of short sessions intended to get the group together in good shape for the workshop – reflecting back on last time, some commentaries on the readings, some preparatory thoughts for this workshop, each requiring discussions with neighbours and speaking out into the large group.

Robin suggests that we take a short break before he makes his presentation which might take an hour or so.

The mood, we agree, seems to be open, expectant, a little anxious about what these experiences might entail. I hear references to the request that we included in the joining letter that participants should bring warm clothing and stout shoes, is this a “physical” exercise with mutterings about ropes and pointing out of the pile of wellington boots, socks and coats that Kate, the course administrator, has brought in. We talk in the break about much of the commentary on the readings, that they are difficult and obscure. Should I comment on this further? We agree not to dwell on the point and give it undue weight.

I mention recently reading William Isaacs’s suggestion in “Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together,” (1999) that such a ‘getting here’ process is essential preparation for a group to ‘release’ itself into a mood in which ‘thinking together’ can occur. It has taken about an hour, so far, does this seem the right amount of time?

(How are you doing with this combination of forms. I hope it is not too complex.

I am anxious to convey two aspects of my experience and learning:

- > one is the time spent in preparation. I will include a specific note on this, especially as it impacts on the roles Adrian and I chose to perform and the interaction between them. This aspect, the interaction, is a representation in being of the relation between form and content that I strive for in my writing.
- > the other aspect is the effort and time spent in the setting and settling down. I think it is impossible to know what the ‘right’ amount of effort and time is, but I certainly have a sense that this ‘theatrical’ aspect works, even for participants who are ‘put off’ by particular aspects of the setting or frustrated at the time taken in settling down. In conversations in CAGs, particularly, I have been struck by how much AMOC participants have noticed and commented on the care I have given to preparation and the obvious sense of partnership, in this particular case with Adrian, we have displayed.

A Note on our Preparation.

There is one particular aspect of our preparation that I want to mention. This is the time that we spend talking about our respective roles through the three days; how they relate to our respective levels of ownership for the content, and the interaction between us of holding process and delivering content.

We agreed to an overall design and flow of the workshop and left each other to “fill in” the sessions we agreed to lead. We were clear and explicit about this, having learned to appreciate through reviewing our previous workshops, that we enjoy a degree of spontaneity and surprise within a framework design and purpose we have developed together. We now trust one another to run particular sessions in a way which is both distinctively individual and yet congruent with each other. This is one of the “examples of practice” we would like the participants, as developing practitioners themselves, to “see”. We enjoy working together and bring to each other a combination of congruence, diversity and trust.

But what I am noticing now, on further reflection, is how the fact that we each flow in and out of the process and content roles offers an example of integration. I am appreciating both the separation – to make it clear that each is covered – and the flowing interaction, which gives this sense of integration I am pursuing.

Presentation.

We settle back into the circle of chairs and Robin waits for silence, leaning forward in his chair.

He starts to speak:

“Come a little closer.

I woke up this morning with two phrases which seem to capture the essence of what I want to talk about, which I have written up here.”

He points to the two flip charts he has placed either side of himself, opening out the circle of chairs so that we can all see. On the first is written:

What you see depends on how you look

“This is, in a way, a fundamental proposition for this workshop which is about inquiry but also captures something of the underlying philosophy of our whole approach to consulting.

This suggests that there is no such thing as an objective truth – any more – and I want us to grapple with the implications of this notion and be excited about it, to feel it as a liberation.

The other phrase I woke up with is this.”

He points to the second chart on which is written:

I want to tickle your fancy

“ I realise I am not sure how this might translate into German, speaking as we were of difficult language, but more particularly I want to draw your attention to the word “fancy”. I choose this deliberately as the word the English Romantic poets often used for imagination – and I am very interested in the human capacity, which may be unique amongst species, for imagining, which contains notions of image and making in its etymology. And the word fancy conjures this up in the particular context of the Romantic view as a counter, in a way, to the prevailing scientific norm. And this will form a part of my argument, a proper perspective on scientism and the possibility of a form of inquiry which honours our imaginative capacity. So, I want to tickle your fancy or excite your imagination and if you do find some of the ideas that we will be dealing with and the language associated with them a bit daunting, then I want to so excite you that you feel delighted to hang in, as it were, and see where the ride might take you.

The ride we have planned for you has two components, essentially. One is this presentation I am now making to you, which is intended to frame your personal inquiry, to get you thinking about it in the terms we are advocating. And then, for most of the rest of the day we are going to suggest a series of steps for you to follow in your own, personal inquiry. The intention of this is that you discover something, hopefully, which will be entirely relevant to you and that you practise a particular inquiry process, a series of steps, which we will ask you to follow again tomorrow in groups as you go out into your organisational inquiries.

As for this presentation I have brought along a few 35mm slides I want to show you, a couple of pieces of music I want to play and a reading or two. I want to present to you in a way which I think is congruent with the message I want to convey.

One of the phrases I am sure you will be liberally using in about six months time is “the extended epistemology”, referring to the work of John Heron and Peter

Reason. One of the elements of this particular formulation of four-fold knowing is the idea of presentational knowing which interests me particularly as a writer and, I realise, as a teacher. For one of my fascinations is with the power of “not-knowing”. There is, in our imaginative capacity, a magic, the magic of mystery and wonder. And although we may strive to know more I believe that there is a profound value in the not-knowing, the humility associated with profound mystery, an awe that we encounter in the presence of what we truly appreciate that we don’t know.

I know that I encounter this magic when I am truly in touch with nature, another reason for referring so thoroughly to the Romantics. And, like them, the forms of expression I find most illuminating are in music and art and poetry.

As a writer I am constantly frustrated by the limitations of words set out in a linear, narrative form. This seems a fine process for trying to explain what we do know.

But it is hopeless at capturing what we don’t know, the not-knowing. Poetry can do it, somehow, in its strange, elliptical, analogic, dense form. And then if we try to explain what we “see”, or hear, then we somehow lose its magical property.

And we are going to invite you, in the stages of your inquiry process, to experiment with forms of presentation that might capture and express the essence of your discovery in ways in which a straight narrative report, either verbal or in writing might not.

So that’s all by way of explaining or framing why I am making this presentation in the way that I am.

And the way that I thought I would start is with a couple of sequences which I have written up here on these charts. I hope the sequences in themselves are quite interesting as a way of setting out a particular proposition, one about organisations, the other about inquiry methodology. But in each case I draw a line at the bottom, as it were, beyond which, it seems to me, a different way of seeing or thinking needs to take place.

Now I could digress into a discussion of learning theory which is, I certainly think, of interest to us as consultants. For now, let me suggest that the sequences I am setting out probably require, at some point if not at the beginning, what we call “double-loop” in Argyris’s terms or “Learning Two” as suggested by Bateson – a

different way of seeing, certainly, from our traditional cultural norm or paradigm. But I think that the challenge that we then get to is a further leap, an imaginative leap which I think accords with Bateson's notion of Learning Three, where the very ground upon which we stand somehow shifts.

I tend to view this as a kind of third dimension of re-orientation, if first and second order learning take place in two-dimensions, as it were, the familiar flat plane of all our four box matrices which explain the world of organisations, then the shift I am inviting you to contemplate here is – well, it is difficult to explain, which is why I resort to other means of expression.

And I am conscious of one of your requests about the workshop – how do we actually use these ideas in practice – and would ask you to stay open to possibility at this stage. It is, after all, a two year programme that we are embarked on together so let's not try and solve everything in a day. I reckon to have been struggling away at this stuff in my own life and practice for at least a decade and still hesitate. At least I can say that what I am going to be asking you to do today is no different from what I have asked genuine managers in traditional organisations, like NatWest bank, to do – so I am not treating today as a sort of experimental outing with tame consultants. And certainly they asked the questions about practical implications and were, by and large, prepared to work with the questions themselves rather than expect a neatly packaged answer.”

At this point Robin tells a story about a NatWest programme he had been working on as an example of the way he uses some of the same ideas and techniques that he is ‘offering’ (this is faithful to his kind of language) us. A ripple of laughter circulates the group.

I am relieved by the laughter and a sense of release which seems to accompany it. I am aware of maintaining a sense of timing which seems innate, to me, and may seem ‘theatrical’ in its intention or effect. I am also anxious to include some commentary on points the participants raised in the opening discussion in order to show points of connection and generate discussion. This is reflection ‘in the moment.’

As I review this opening phase of my presentation at a subsequent stage, I notice a condensed or compressed quality, suggestive of ideas rather than setting them out plainly and clearly. I notice an elliptical and personal quality, as though the notions that I am

expressing are closely connected in some way rather than 'out there' in some otherworld theoretical space. And I notice phrases, such as "tickling your fancy."

I assume that this combination of qualities will be having different effects according to the listeners' preferences. Some may appreciate this style of delivery and be happy to go along with the flow, allowing the ideas to seep in, almost by osmosis. Others may be frustrated at the lack of clear order and purpose. And there may be other reactions, too.

Back 'in the moment' I rely to some extent on Adrian to stop me if he feels the need to. He will be attending to the group's listening. This is a huge advantage in working in this kind of relationship. But I have a sense, too, of my own antennae at work in the group, sensing the mood. At this point I believe that my personal connection to the material is working, that it is not so much what I am saying, precisely, but the way in which I am saying it which might create the possibility of us reaching that stage described in dialogue: 'the art of thinking together.' So I choose to continue.

"So, the first sequence or proposition is about the nature of organisation – to which we consult. You will have seen something like this statement already in the earlier stages of the programme."

Robin turns to the first flip chart board and turns over the page to:-

Organisations are:-

Complex

Adaptive

Self-Organising

Systems.

"Now, at one level this is a suggestion that we see organisations through the lens of a different metaphor than the traditional machine, supported by mechanos or Newtonian mechanics, in which cause and effect are exquisitely and explicitly linked in ways which we can determine and manipulate to the advantage of some purpose like maximising profit or shareholder return, or, I suppose, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless and saving the planet. We seem to think that we can manage all of these, in our western culture, along with time!"

Essentially, it seems to me, the new metaphor continues to apply the discoveries of science, what we tend to call “New Science”, in the terms of quantum mechanics, cosmology and, especially in the latter stages, biology. The field of management consulting and education seems to me to have established a new normative metaphor for organisations which is as a living system, an organism rather than a machine, with many potentially exciting liberations and riddles as a result. Certainly there have been intermediate stages – so much of our management thinking and literature has been fascinated by the psychological dimension, famously since the Hawthorne experiments in the thirties, which seemed to introduce a new “irrational” element – folk would respond not simply as economic machines but in more surprising ways which we needed to understand and adapt to as successful managers or manipulators of organisations.

And systems thinking has been around for as long as cybernetics and ergonomics attended to manufacturing and logistics issues. Social science, too, has added whole levels of understanding to organisations as cultural manifestations with political intrigue abounding.

In a curious way we have established the notion of management as an interrelated set of applied sciences, each offering its own illuminations and limitations, the task of the manager to craft some continuing congruency with liberal doses of what we jokingly call common sense.

Well, now we have to become conversant in the whole field of new science – to make sense of this proposition about organisation.”

(In my earlier draft of this material Judi Marshall wrote a marginal comment at about this point which reads, “I wonder as I read how much you are sticking to script, how much creating as you go, how much deciding as you move along what to fill out and what not. I want a comment on this. And to hear something of the process/content thinking you do whilst talking.”

Well, I am pretty much transcribing, at this point, what I said as recorded on the tape. To that extent I am sticking to script.

In terms of what I choose to say, where to expand, when to pause, and other such process reflections, I am at this stage in my presentation ‘talking out the stream of words I hear in my head.’ This is my best way of expressing this. This material is not ‘rehearsed’

in the sense of thought through in detail, in advance, and re-called or re-membered. Of course it is rehearsed in the sense that the ideas I am expressing I have previously thought and often written about. But at this moment, in the presentation, I am conscious of speaking directly out of my head with very little interrupting agency.

I am offering this to you as thesis reader here because this is my distanced reflection.

I do not really know what effect this way of transmitting my ideas has. It happens sometimes that I get into this kind of flow. I am inclined, in this reflexive mode, to criticise myself for a lack of process awareness. But actually my sense is that for a period, maybe for an attention span of five to ten minutes (is that too long? I do not know) I kind of go into my head, listening for the words to speak. This particular way of presenting has some value because it is un-pre-meditated or mediated. I think that for a while here, you as participant in the group and me as teacher, we are each connected into a stream of thinking which I may be initiating by speaking it out, but engages you too.

Is this specious?

I do not know. I know that as I reflect on the last occasion I gave this talk, in December 2001, I do not recall speaking in this way. My presentation felt, to me, more 'thought through.' This might have been an improvement, as I was certainly more aware of the group and what they might have been thinking, but it felt 'laboured' to me, less exciting and energetic. I felt, afterwards, that I was 'going stale,' that I should completely re-think my material and how I present it to bring it alive again.

I suppose I should have good feed-back to enable me to know which of these two versions worked better for the participants. What I do know is that I felt a buzz of energy on that 1999 occasion as I finished my presentation and invited them to experience an 'immersion' that I did not get in the same way from the 2001 group. I am also aware of a significant number of 'mentions' in the succeeding assignment from the 1999 group for the impact of my presentation and the succeeding exercise, rather more so than for the 2001 group who tended to work more, in their written reflections, with their learning from the group exercise. But what conclusions can I draw from that data? Where is the cause and effect? What difference did the group itself make on me and them and I in relation?

All I know for the moment, as a developing practitioner, is that there does seem to be some combination of the prepared, or rehearsed, and the spontaneous that 'works' for

me and the participants. I think that the impact is in our joint learning, for a connection that we strike up, somehow, to be thinking together, rather than me 'present' pre-digested ideas for them to hear, at a critical distance).

"Certainly you will be hearing much more about the underlying ideas of complexity theory and how they inform consulting interventions as this programme develops. Systems theory takes on a different dimension as we add the notion of complexity, essentially moving from a world explained by linear equations to one which includes the many parallel paths of non-linear equations - a multiple third dimension.

So, literally, the images produced by computer of processing non-linear equations, those beautifully shifting patterns in and out of chaos and confusion and into order establishes the key notion of "bounded instability" – a state suspended between order and chaos in which creative adaptations can thrive.

The idea of organisations as adaptive, self-organising systems similar to living organisms is, I think, profoundly challenging to the traditional ways we think of organising and managing. Again, later in the programme, you will have the opportunity to think about properties like autopoiesis, another of those terms which will trip off your lips, and dissipative structures, properties of systems that scientists such as Prigogine and Varela have been examining for that elusive definition of "living" – where is the boundary between the animate and the inanimate. The Web of Life by Fritjof Capra has been recommended to you as a relatively accessible entry into this field of science as it informs Capra's view, any way, of the particular quality of life processes. (Capra 1996)

If we are to adopt this particular view of organisations what we choose to manage and how we do so seem to be deadly serious – indeed, one could take the view that much of our present management orthodoxy is, indeed, deadening, attempting to control much of the life giving property, the self-organising and regenerative capacity of the organisation seen as an organism.

For the moment I want to draw a line at this point, which is to suggest that this is certainly a new way of thinking about organisations but one which continues to rely on and privilege a scientific metaphor.

But as well as asking you to think about the implications of consulting to organisations which may have these properties we are, during this programme, also asking you to become researchers, particularly in the fourth, dissertation, module. We do this partly for its own sake, believing that your development will be enhanced if you approach it through some kind of research or inquiry process, but also because we believe that inquiry, which is the term you will hear us constantly using, is, in itself an important aspect of the consultants' practice.

So, as well as thinking about the "science of organisations", as it were, which was the first chart, we also want you to think about becoming a social scientist, a researcher in the field of sociology and anthropology, primarily – research into social systems.

Now this science, too, has gone through a series of developments or crises, as the reading from Denzin and Lincoln suggested. In particular, they refer to a "double crisis" engendered by the postmodern debate, of representation and legitimation. (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: pp. 1-17) The first questions our capacity to capture lived experience and the second involves a serious re-thinking of such scientific concerns as validity, generalizability and reliability. We will be returning to these issues more specifically in the Forms of Inquiry workshop in Module 3 – for now I want to point out that we are, as researchers in this field, engaged at a moment when the rules of research according to the traditional notions of scientific method are fundamentally challenged.

Essentially the notion that we can take up some objective position as an observer standing outside a system that we are trying, for example, to diagnose, a very typical consulting notion, is challenged by the first phrase I offered which is that what we see depends on how we look. In the philosophy of science this separation of observer and observed, the objective scientist assessing his (typically) subject was pretty ruthlessly smashed by the discoveries of quantum mechanics; that appalling moment when Niels Bohr and others recognised that what they saw, a material object, an electron, or an energy form, a wave, depended not on the facts themselves as presented but on their observing perspective. And somehow this sudden release into issues of uncertainty and probability also cascaded through the fabric of scientific method to question the so-called objectivity of science. The term

that we bandy about so freely, paradigm, as in paradigm shift, emanates from precisely this process of re-examining the basis upon which scientific discoveries are made as expressed in Thomas Kuhn's famously mis-understood, at least in his view, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", first published in 1962, which introduced the era of post-positivism, a term we need to understand alongside post-modernism.

I t occurs to me that the great service Kuhn did was to point out that science is certainly not value free – it is riddled with assumptions and prejudices which the social sciences, in particular, have continued to meet in successive crises of cultural and gender imperialism, especially, as well as the more arcane problems of textual analysis implied in the post-structuralist debate also referred to by Lincoln and Denzin.

For those of you who were daunted by the language of some of the articles we offered you I can't help but read this impassioned piece from one of the authors who helped me get a grip on some of this stuff, Ellen Dissanayake, in her book Homo Aestheticus, from her final chapter "Does Writing Erase Art?" which just appeals to me as a writer –

"According to the holy writ of postmodernism, we can never reach or get through to an unmediated Reality. There is an irrevocable, unbridgeable gap, fissure, cleavage between us and the wordless possession of meaning that we desire. Union is perpetually deferred, and an unremediable difference exists between us and everything else. The objectivity and disembodiedness fostered by literacy has now become utter severance and nonpresence.

One might suppose that the reaction to recognizing such a hopeless, helpless state of affairs would be an existentialist-like angst or nausea, leading to denial or catatonic despair. But not at all. The response to this bleak news, which only those at the higher reaches of the literate tradition can comprehend, much less formulate, is to write about it. And write and write and write with what looks suspiciously like smugness and glee. Yet while their philosophical findings are literally unthinkable without "literacy" – the type of mind made possible and fostered by the literate tradition – they discuss these in prose that is the reverse of the literate ideal of lucid exposition. Postmodern writers play with language, self-

indulgently, learnedly, even perversely, and with detectible self-congratulation at their cleverness. While inventive and imaginative, this kind of writing, it must be said, has nothing to do with the old oral mode. No bard or troubador worth his salt would use such obfuscation and labyrinthine arcaneness. He would know that the audience would soon be pelting him with rotten pomegranates or unripe olives, or at the very least would start to steal silently away after the first few utterances. Post-modern writing is something new in human communication: it is a writing based on writing that yet sabotages and subverts writing. Like children of the rich who disdain and criticize their parents' materialism while they accept monthly handouts that make possible their bohemian style of life, postmodern writers bite the hand that feeds them." (Dissanayake 1995: pp. 210-1)

Let me just pause to check that I am not about to be pelted with unripe olives or that your eyes have stealed shut in a polite retreat. How are we doing? Are there questions or arguments wanting to be heard?"

There is a considerable period of silence on the tape. And then one participant says "I'd really like you to carry on for the moment without interruption." A general murmur seems to suggest agreement.

I scan the group and turn to Adrian for confirmation. I also check my belly for a signal of comfort or queasiness – it is a very delicate sensing device! I am sufficiently at ease to carry on. I have broken the flow of my delivery, deliberately, helped by the physical shift necessary to read the quotation. My attention has somehow shifted from within my head, making sense of the words I hear there to the group. This is, now, a different kind of connection, more deliberate. But I am still feeling good, so can move on without too much sense of a break from the ideas spilling through my head.

"I have introduced the Dissanayake quote partly as a kind of relief specifically about language and its mis-use, but also to suggest that we don't have to take all this post-ness too literally. I suspect, as she does, that there is a Reality out there that we can observe, touch and experience – indeed, in a short while I am going to suggest you do just that. But it is also true, in my opinion, that we over-reach our sense of objectivity and this results in an imperialistic or dominant attitude towards the rest of nature for example, or in the anthropological tradition which is where I

started on this little excursion, in a wholly unacceptable colonial appropriation of others' deepest beliefs.

And we are subject to the same kind of ethical and methodological error in the way we might approach organisations as expert, objective observers, unaware of our own particular prejudged and pre-formed perspectives and the impact of our initial questions. We participate in the system inevitably, and are therefore subject to it in some degree.

Hence the first step in this particular sequence about research into social systems."

Robin turns to the second flip chart and turns the page:-

Research as:-

Participative

Qualitative

Action oriented

(Appreciative) Inquiry

(I would like to signal a change in my style of presentation in my thesis at this point. It seems to me that I have probably included at least enough of the transcript of my teaching session. Much of the material I include in the next section has already been covered in my Philosophical Review in section 3. And, in any case, the purpose of its inclusion is related to form and reflection rather than content. I do, however, want to present the way I include images and music, for that is a significant part of my inquiry.

In order to do so effectively I think I will just have to say a little more about the overall shape of my argument, particularly as it relates to the idea of a 'science of quality.' This aspect builds on the brief mention I gave to Goethe in The Imagination in section 3.

But I would like to pause again, at this point, for a more distanced reflection on my process for creating a teaching session such as the one I am including here. This is a reflection on content and structure.

As I have suggested earlier, the material I was presenting in this session is well prepared and rehearsed in the sense that I have read about it, written about it and often spoken about it in different settings before. But I noted in the previous distanced reflection a particular quality of 'flow' which seems, on occasion, to occur. I am not sure whether

this is good teaching practice or good, in the moment, action inquiry as I suggested that I am probably unaware, at times like this, of what I am doing and the effect that I am having.

Be that as it may, my interest for the moment is the process which leads, potentially, to this state of flow. I am sure that one element is a sufficient degree of confidence. I have mentioned that in this instance I was working with Adrian McLean, a colleague in whom I have great confidence and trust and with whom I am at ease.

Another factor, I believe, is the relative proximity with which I have been working some of the ideas I want to portray. In this instance I had completed the essays for the Cranfield case pack earlier in the summer so somehow the ideas had gained a certain degree of maturity (I envisage this process as something like wine maturing in the bottle.) They were close enough for me to feel confident that I could recall them easily and yet not so close as to be available only in an undigested form.

The third factor is represented by the particular framing scheme portrayed by the two sets of flip charts. The pattern of ideas represented in these emerged out of my unconscious processing of my proposed presentation a day or two before the session. The particular opening phrases, as I recall, formed themselves as I took an early morning run on the day of the session itself.

I am beginning to rely, I realise, on this unconscious aspect of my preparation, provided that I am reasonably relaxed. If I am overly anxious it, my unconscious, does not seem to 'work.'

I have mentioned my MBTI Type in relation to appreciating imagery, as an introverted intuitive. I suppose that what I am noticing here is that the aspect of 'flow' I am describing has an 'introverted' or inner quality in that I am directly in contact with my process of thinking through, in language, my ideas. The 'pattern' is also significant, in that as an intuitive perceiver I rely on pattern rather than detail. Indeed the pattern provides me with a 'frame' in which I can then 'fit' the detail. (This process of fitting, I realise, can lead to a certain degree of 'forcing' the ideas into the pattern.)

My personal process, then, is that I am relieved from anxiety about 'knowing' what I am going to say, to some considerable degree, if I have a pattern or frame in which the ideas make sense to me.

As with my earlier reflection on this aspect of 'flow' I suppose I should know more clearly its implications for the participants. My psychological understanding of Type

would suggest that people with similar intuitive preferences are likely to appreciate the pattern of ideas whereas people with more of a sensing preference might prefer rather more careful consideration for detail. As it happens most of my colleagues within the AMOC faculty also enjoy intuitive preferences, so I have tended to be confirmed by them in the feedback they have given me.

The best evidence I have for the effect of this particular presentation on the participants is through their written assignments, a number of which I see as an assessor or moderator. My consistent impression, but this may be my preferred perception, of course, is that the important service I am offering is the conveying of my own enthusiasm for these ideas in a way which encourages them to experiment for themselves. It is not the precision of the ideas but their energy which is provocative.

And part of my provocation is in the style of my presentation, which has this element of flow when I am confident, but is also characterised by my use of images and music, which is where this reflection is leading.

But there is one more point with which I have to remind myself, which I have mentioned earlier in relation to my preparation and the setting. If I am well prepared and at ease then participants notice. I know that they notice, at least some of them, the care I put into my preparation for that has been a consistent aspect of direct feedback I have received. But it is my belief that my sense of confidence, as well as enthusiasm, is transmitted and helps participants with their own experimentation –they trust me, to some considerable extent, to have a go.

My intended process, then, for this next phase of this chapter, is a brief recapitulation of my argument about the science of quality to introduce the sequence of images and musical pieces I play, along with brief commentary).

An argument about quality.

I suggest that there is a pattern to the two sequences I have portrayed on the flip charts, a scientific view of organisations and the development of a participative and qualitative form of inquiry in social research. I believe that, to some extent, both sequences have reached a point where the normative procedures and assumptions of science have a limited value. It as though the two sequences have reached a threshold of some kind.

In my essay for the Cranfield Case Pack, the Scientific Perspective, I reviewed the competing claims of John Horgan as presented in his book “The End of Science, Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age,” (Horgan 1996) and John Maddox’s “What Remains to be Discovered,” (Maddox, 1998.)

I found the ideas that unite their two positions most fascinating. Both Horgan and Maddox suggest that our present ways of thinking, along with the social structures of scientific research and the limitations of empirical methods, lie at the heart of a present liminal state. But I am persuaded, too, that our own cognitive capacity as human beings is also severely tested by the increasing complexity of what we apparently know. (I included my attachment to Chomsky’s thoughts on this in my Philosophical Reflection.)

My interest in The Imagination, along with a continuing fascination for the boundary between scientific research and metaphysical thought, leads me into present debates about the nature of consciousness.

Mary Midgeley argues, “*we must surely accept that the kinds of explanation we need vary according to the nature of our topic that is the trouble we are presently having about consciousness. We really need new concepts that will bring into focus again the whole person. We need to correct the unrealistic division which has long distorted our thought, and which is now being constantly widened by the image of the mind as a computer program, carrying the sharp, simple dualism of software and hardware.*” (Midgeley 1998: pp. 251-2)

I am fascinated by the arguments which rage between the materialists and those who see in nature some other, potentially spiritual, dimension. Similarly reductionism and wholism feature in a perpetual debate, especially in the life sciences. I am sure I read what I know I believe, and have been much comforted by the biology of, for instance, Brian Goodwin and Stephen Rose. The former is quoted in a passage from a wonderful compendium of essays pointing toward a more holistic science, edited by Willis Harman with Jane Clarke.

In his concluding essay, Willis Harman notes. “*the proposed shift from an ontological assumption of separateness to one of wholeness may seem innocuously simple – perhaps even simplistic and naïve. But in fact, there is at least as sound a basis in human experience for the latter assumption. In the “perennial wisdom” of the world’s spiritual traditions, and in the understandings of most indigenous peoples, it would seem the natural*

assumption. Furthermore, as Brian Goodwin has pointed out (Goodwin 1987) the Renaissance nature philosophy of Francesco Giorgi et al., based precisely on the “oneness” assumption, initially competed with the “separateness” science of Descartes and Galileo, but in the end was rejected as being less suited to contributing to the developing passion for “controlling nature” through technology. (Harman, 1994, pp. 376-377)

Giorgi as I understand it, was deeply influenced by the neo-platonic thinking of Ficino, one of my favourite figures. But at this concluding point of my argument about quality I want to refer again to another figure who carried the neo-platonic tradition into the Romantic age, that of Goethe.

In a way Goethe's views on the scientific process, which occupied him at least as much as his artistic impulse, seem remarkably contemporary, even post-modern. He distinguished different ways of conceiving and realized that the way of conceiving could not be separated from the content, that is, from what is seen. The way of conceiving is integral to scientific cognition. It is in this respect that Goethe's work on colour, for instance, leads us towards a science of quality in its own right and hence to discover the possibility of a new kind of macroscopic science. This is the direction in which Goethe takes us: towards a science of the lived experience of phenomena, instead of mathematical abstractions and microscopic explanations.

Goethe begins with the phenomenon and sees the task of science as to make the inner-dimensionality of the phenomenon visible, which requires a new way of seeing. It is a feature of this new way of seeing that it sees unity in an inside-out way compared to the abstract unity, which is no more than what things have in common – their external unity. The archetype which Goethe is after is the inner dimension of the phenomenon, whether it be colour or his famous studies on the morphology of plants, in which he was trying to discover the very essence of growth in living things.

At the end of his essay on “Goethe and the Concept of Metamorphosis,” Adolf Portmann writes, *“It is high time we re-discovered the exemplary nature of an attempt such as that which Goethe has given us in his “Metamorphosis in Plants.” The accelerated development of biological research in the direction of genetic engineering, that investigates the visible realm in order to achieve mastery over the processes of nature – this unavoidable development will result in a horrifying impoverishment of our relationship to*

nature if we do not begin immediately to take to heart the value of an extensive experience with living form for the cultivation of the soul. New forms of science of nature are called for, a science of nature which is not a pale reflection of today's science, but rather leads to a deepened experience with the realm of living forms and makes nature for us a true home." (Portmann 1996: pp. 21-22)

As conceived by Goethe, science is as much an inner path of spiritual development as it is a discipline aimed at accumulating knowledge of the physical world. Rather than simply making new discoveries and propounding new theories on the basis of ever more refined techniques of physical observation, the aim of science is, for Goethe, to open the eyes and mind of the beholder of nature to what is spiritually at work within, or at root of, the observed physical phenomena. It therefore involves not only a rigorous training of our faculties of observation and thinking, but also of other human faculties which can attune us to the spiritual dimension that underlies and interpenetrates the physical: faculties such as feeling, imagination and intuition. Science, as Goethe conceived and practised it, has as its highest goal the arousal of the feeling of wonder through 'contemplative looking.'

And it is with this notion of 'contemplative looking,' or 'immersion' that I get to my link with the images and music that I use to illustrate my argument.

(So, join me now reader in a consideration of my choice to use images and extracts of music. I have tried to 'frame' or 'explain' this move in my teaching practice as though it is reasoned, in the sense of thought out. But it is not like that. The way I have chosen to teach this session feels instinctive. I choose to teach in this way because this is how I have learned and am learning. I offer, I believe, 'a part of myself.' In this regard the distinction I have made in my thesis between Who I am and What I know is particularly blurred.

One of the aspects that I do 'think through' relates to this aspect of how much of myself do I offer. I am interested in a particular choice. Do I include some aspect of my personal story, with a display of the two Turner images? (These are the two images I included in section 1 of my thesis, which I name as Hope and Despair.)

As I listen to the tape of the session I am attempting to portray in this chapter I notice that I did start with this story, briefly told, and with the benefit of these earlier remarks am pleased that I did so. My action, my choice, seems to me to be a particular form of leadership which is to place my own vulnerable quest into the theatre I am creating.

I am, now, once again facing the issue of finding an appropriate form in which to present this aspect of my teaching session. You have already seen some of the images and their related musical accompaniment in Interludes within the body of my thesis. And the Interludes attempt to frame their inclusion in much the same way as I introduced them to my students on this occasion of my teaching session. So, what do you need to know at this point that adds to your appreciation for what I am learning, and how?

I think what I will do is simply list the images I chose to show on this occasion – they have varied over time – along with the two pieces of music I played. I will include these on the accompanying tape. I will also include the text of a piece from “The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,” with which I concluded this first part of the session.

To complete the sense of context I will briefly describe the experiential element of the session and then conclude the chapter with a further ‘distanced’ reflection on what I believe I am learning about this process of including images and music as part of my presentation).

> **Hope and Despair:** I showed first the two slides by Turner included in section 1 of this thesis, speaking the explanation, more or less, that I offered you.

> **Newton and Goethe:** The second pair of images I showed are included with this chapter. The first is “Newton” by William Blake, c.1805. The second is “Light and Colour (Goethe’s Theory) the Morning after the Deluge,” by Turner, 1843. My accompanying explanation follows the lines I set out in my argument about quality earlier in this chapter.

In addition to my argument about quality and the challenge to the scientific revolution posed by the Romantics, I drew attention to the particular aspect of Turner’s work which is the way he uses colour. I commented on this earlier in the thesis in presenting Kahn’s self-portrait in the Interlude The Apprentice Alchemist. I suggested that there is a clear link in the way that the painting is named after Goethe’s Theory between the way Turner crafted landscape and light out of colour and the way Goethe saw colour through light.

> **Inner and Outer in Collision:** This is the image of the Imagination I included in my section on the Imagination in section 3, “The Gleaming Fields,” by Samuel Palmer.

Again my 'explanation' has appeared in this thesis in that section. My point is the way in which Palmer's craft seems to me to capture an immanent sense of spirituality in nature. I think that this is portrayed as the connection between his inner contemplation and his outer appreciation, somehow rendered through his curious use of perspective and the way the light seems to shine from within his subject.

(In commenting in this way on the images by Palmer and Turner, in particular, I invited, I believe, the participants to 'see' what it is I am suggesting they might discover for themselves by 'looking' in the way that Goethe looked.

At this point in my teaching session I played the first of my two pieces of music, while the Palmer image was displayed. I realise that I have chosen a different piece in my thesis, the Beethoven Pastoral extract, whereas in the teaching session I played another favourite, a song included in Mahler's third symphony).

> O man! Take heed! : This is the poem by Friedrich Nietzsche that Mahler chooses to include as his fourth movement to Symphony No 3. I choose it for the words, the poet/philosopher who wrote them, and what seems to me the magical property they take on when transformed by Mahler's music.

(At this point I run out of explanation. It is clear that Nietzsche and Mahler both represent elements of the same Romantic tradition as Blake and Turner and Palmer. But I know that when I hear the hushed opening of the song, the contralto's entry, I have a visceral response which is beyond explanation. I can describe the way that my 'skin crawls,' and the deep emptiness in my belly that opens out to the music – but - well, perhaps you might like to listen, too, for a few moments!)

(cd extract)

(At this point in my presentation, after showing the Palmer image accompanied by the Mahler music, I suggest to the participants that I will be inviting them to practise being 'Goethean scientists of quality.' By this I mean that they should adopt a similar process of scientific inquiry, albeit briefly, that I understand Goethe to have followed. I present the process something like this).

Experiencing Immersion.

“Goethe, it seems to me, combined two aspects of inquiry which I want to introduce through my presentation and which I want you to experience for yourselves, to the extent that you are willing. The first step is:-

- *Immersion: which is to engage with the quality of one’s study in a kind of deep contemplation.*

In practical terms I suggest that you might like to go out into the grounds of Ashridge and find a place to be, and to ‘immerse’ yourself in that place for a minimum of half an hour.

The second step is to capture the quality of your discovery through using your:-

- *Imagination: which you might like to do by creating an image with the material provided around the room, or you might like to write a poem or a piece of ‘stream of consciousness’ narrative.*

I will then describe to you two subsequent steps in the process.

I conclude my presentation with two final ‘pieces.’ I want to read you an extract from:-

- *Zen and the Art of motorcycle maintenance. My explanation or justification is that I believe both consulting and inquiry are craft practices which benefit from the kind of attention, or concern for quality, which Pirsig offers in this remarkable book.”*

“And finally, to encourage you on your way, a song by a great Irish philosopher, Van Morrison:-

- *Enlightenment: My point is that, as the song suggests, our great liberation but also our responsibility is that we can choose how we think.. I believe that’s what I saw in the bridge between Despair and Hope is this idea – that we can choose, indeed we have to choose whether we know it or not, how to think. This is the liberation of the post-modern age.”*

(The words to this song are included in the notes to the cd. I tend to have them available for participants, too, as they invariably ask for them. You will recognise this as the song I chose to accompany our walk between Despair and Hope into the first Section.

The third and fourth steps in the experiential part of the session are):-

- > *“to take a walk with a colleague and talk about your discovery so far.”*

(I mentioned my attachment to contemplative walking in my Note on Hearing. The extract I take from Gabriel Josopivici is included in the references.)

> “to join with two other colleagues to form a quartet. In this quartet discuss what you have discovered about the processes of immersion and using your imagination and be prepared to include these in a whole group dialogue.

> you are also encouraged, as always, to capture your experience and learning in your journal.”

A concluding reflection.

This has turned out to be a long piece. But, in a way, it is representative, or intended to be, of the culmination of how Who I Am and What I Know combine into my practice as teacher. The piece has tried to convey some aspects of:-

- what I teach, the content
- how I teach, my process
- how I reflect on my teaching, my reflexive practice.

And in the process of trying to convey these elements I have found myself puzzling about how best to engage you, as reader, in a way which is congruent.

In this sense the writing of this chapter has been representative of the overall issue I have faced as writer about how to engage you effectively as reader. I have tried, in this section, a number of different approaches to meet the needs of different aspects of my material.

In terms of my more distanced reflections on my teaching practice I have included a couple of lengthy pieces about my sense of ‘flow’ and the conditions which make that possible. I have admitted that I do not know whether it is particularly desirable, from the participant’s point of view.

I have also indicated in these reflections that I do get some idea of the effect of the overall session by mentions within assignments that participants write at the conclusion of the first semester. I have not tracked these in any quantitative way and cannot imagine how I could distinguish the impact of what I have done from so much else besides, including, of course, the particular interests and perspectives of the participants themselves.

Of course one sees what one looks for, so I have been pleased to notice that a number of participants seem to have been influenced by the session. It has been mentioned again, as a defining moment, in a number of dissertations which participants write in the final semester.

My personal hypothesis is that how I say what I say is at least as important as what I say. In this particular regard I have three pieces of quite specific feed-back I would like to reflect on with you.

The first is an e-mail I received in relation to the particular session I have re-presented:-

"I just wanted to say thank youI was really inspired by your facilitation and particularly your ability to reflect and inquire into what was happening for you in the moment and to let the group know how you were feeling . . .wonderfulI aspire to doing more of this myself picking up some of the words you used and the style of delivery (slightly tentative, not at all judging and completely 'owned') helped me a great deal.

I found the workshop very powerfuland I'm still processing it on many levels. I'll remember it as very special in terms of human connections, creativity and possibilities that can exist within groups and of the progress we made as a communityThank you for holding the space which allowed the work we did to unfoldthe passion and vulnerability framing of the ritual was spot on . . . your willingness to be vulnerable and share your creative writing too . . . magic"

(e-mail from AMOC participant, Dec 19th 1999)

I have preserved and quoted this particular e-mail as it refers to a number of the qualities I value in my practice and continue to place particular attention on:-

- reflection and inquiry "in the moment"
- expressing your feelings
- delivery style and language – tentative, not judging and owned
- group as community – possibilities and creativity
- holding space
- ritual
- passion and vulnerability
- sharing your creativity.

This is a list of my aspirations when I am 'working well.' When I am working well I hope to 'be' these qualities, a state beyond believing in them and 'doing' them. And it is this state, which I choose to call 'authentic.' I mean by this I am combining, as best I can in the moment, Who I Am and What I Know.

The paradox seems to me that in this 'authentic' state I am not 'teaching' in the sense of trying to convey a message or knowledge, but I am in a state where I trust that whatever the group, and the individuals who constitute it, need at that moment, will emerge from our connected processes. It is the relationship that works.

But I have also had several long discussions with participants some way into the programme, in CAGs that I have facilitated and in the process of being selected as a supervisor, that I am, or was intimidating. That particular word has been repeated by different people, intimidating.

Of course this is so far from my intention that I have tried to understand its source. Some of these participants have been explicit in saying they were intimidated by my cultural references, by seeming too widely read or learned. (Which is wonderfully ironic given my predisposition to doubt myself as sufficiently 'learned.')

And I know, too, from these conversations, and plenty of others besides, that what I think of as my diffidence gets translated as aloofness, another characteristic of an Introvert Type, I fear.

I more recently read this comment offered at a moment in my teaching when I felt less relaxed, indeed under some considerable degree of 'attack.' I include it for the sense it conveys to me that I am, indeed, 'growing up.' I am learning to hear differently.

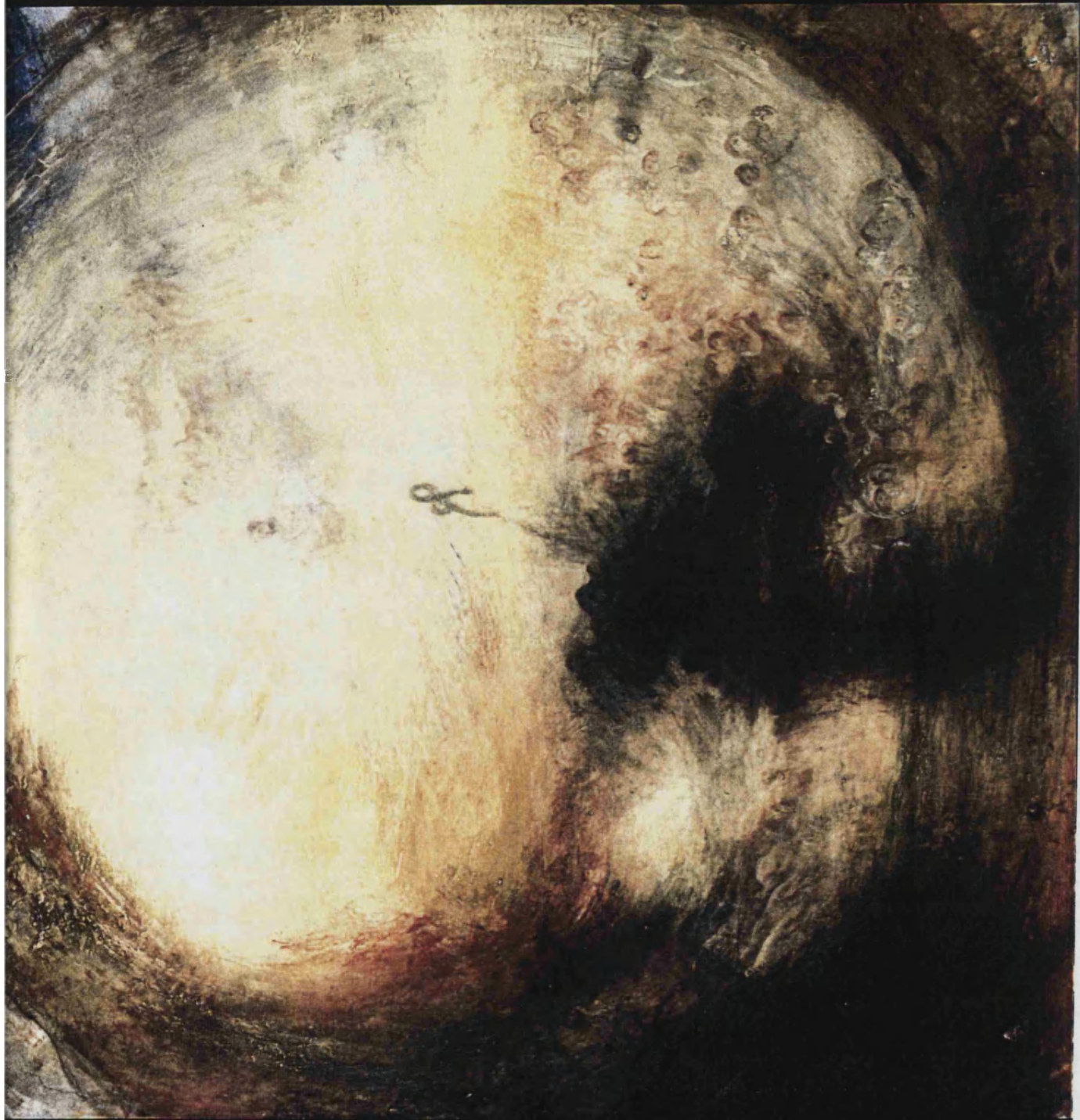
"The big group seems more at ease. I am highly energized on the first morning, only to feel deflated by the push back around the pre-reading. We are invited to share our reflections, and Mike comes straight in with an articulate critique of the 'self referential' and academic pretentiousness of the reading. It doesn't seem to be aimed at Robin (although my response is 'Poor guy, first morning with us and under attack already') but rather hung out for comment (e.g. 'you devil, Mike'). At one level, I am relieved that someone I understand to be an academic himself is pushing back, especially as I gave up on at least one paper because I couldn't understand it. But my overall emotion was one of deflation. This increased as others (I don't recall an order) pitched in and we had several minutes of general 'whingeing' about the reading. More negative energy experienced by me, and the old acronym SNIOP came to mind (we are constantly 'Surrounded by the Negative Influence of Other People'). I notice that I am inclined to take a positive stance with almost

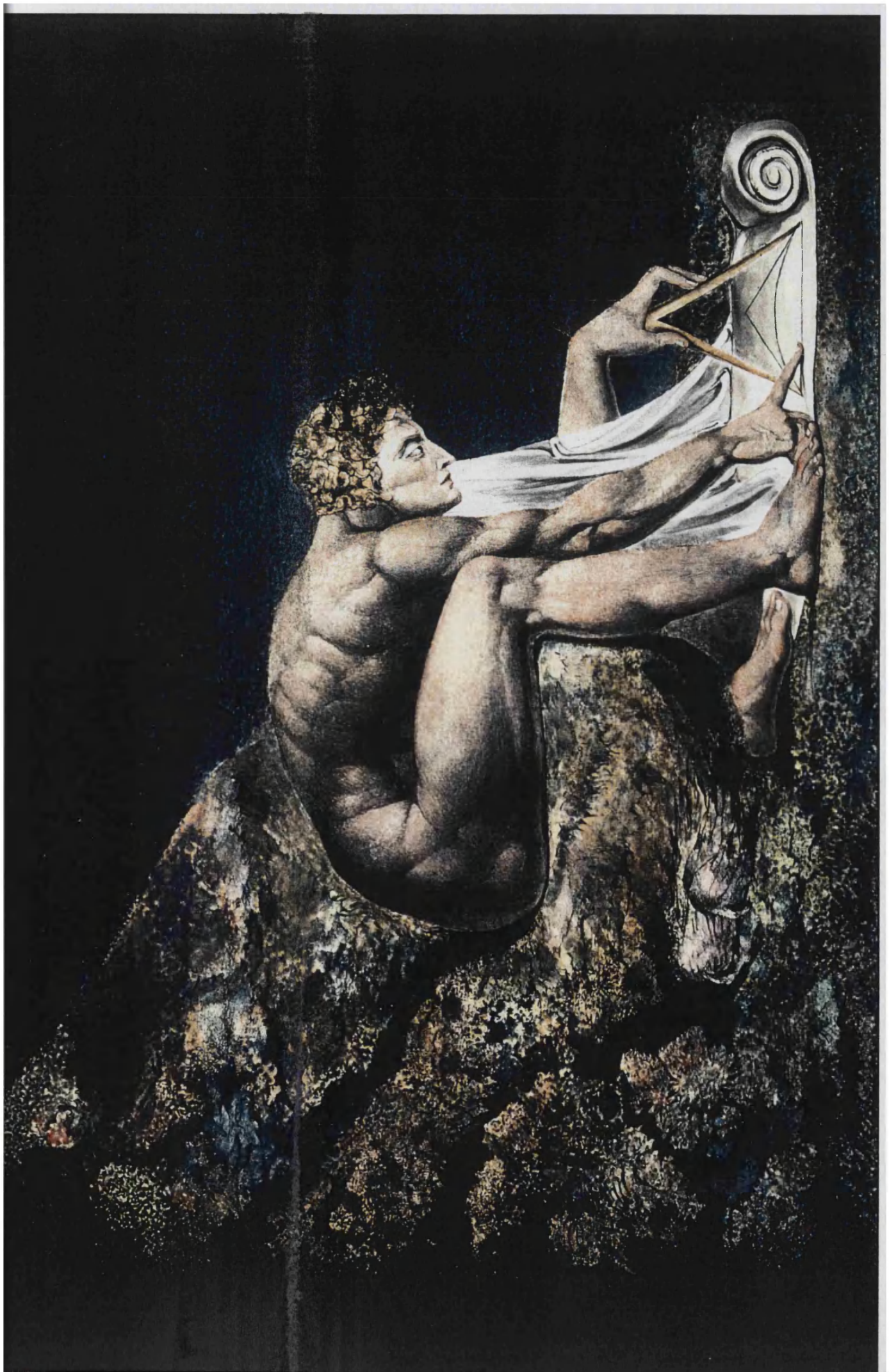
everything and wonder on reflection if this is misplaced and makes me prone to accept things at 'face value'. Well at least the dialogue session took a life of its own without any of the 'rubbishing' nonsense of the last workshop [personal note not to collude]. Has the group moved beyond forming and storming? I doubt it.

I am struck by Robin's method of delivery and facilitation. He handles push back on reading in such a way that the effect is disarming and calming. I recall it being something around a purity of intent (no cleverness or outwitting intended), and self-deprecation around his own possible 'pretentiousness'. He continues by introducing concepts with a light touch. He 'tickles our fancy'. I make connections between 'clock time' and 'charismatic time' (Heron, 1999) in watching him work. He appears to be modelling the latter approach and I make note of the easy rhythm, silences and rich imagery for my own practice. " (Extract from AMOC assignment January 2002)

I include the 'framing' remarks about the large group formation to clarify that the participant who wrote this piece was 'perceiving' from a position of positive regard. Other participants may have had a quite different experience. But my appreciation for the comment is, as with the earlier response, for the precision of its articulation of a practical learning I have been working on - the ability to 'hear differently', which is something like listening for the underlying issues and intent. I was also pleased to have another approving remark for the 'experimental' use of images and music.

I am left with my own reflections, partial comments and much silence. I believe that my continuing attention to how I teach, and especially how I facilitate learning, is the key to any success I have. For it is in the relation between my learning and that of those that I purport to teach, our joint participation in learning, that more choicefulness and, maybe, a little wisdom, will emerge.





A DIALECTIC THOU - THE AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE

1st draft March 2001

2nd draft February 2002

3rd draft May 2002

As advertised in the Dialectic Thou to section 4, The Aesthetic Perspective is one of three essays Robin wrote for inclusion in the Case Pack for the elective course that he and Donna Ladkin ran for MBA students at Cranfield Business School.

This essay is Robin's external expression, as teacher, of many of the ideas he included in the chapter The Imagination in section 3. In addition to his notion of the Imagination as the choice point of collision between inner and outer and the significance of the Romantic tradition, The Aesthetic Perspective offers two additional aspects of Robin's scholarship:-

- one is that we have reached a particular moment in the narrative of art, especially visual art, which could be described as an end point.
- his second point is to re-claim aesthetic as a verb, in the sense of living artistically.

He sees these points as related. The 'End of Art' as a separate, commercialised product, as his first point suggests, opens up the possibility to re-establish art as an aspect of the way in which we conduct our lives.

The Art movement seems to be determined, in Robin's appreciation, to pursue a kind of anti-art. The product of art has become less important as either representational or beautiful object. Instead the work has to be viewed within its wider context and appreciated for its process as much as its product. This 'post-modern' phenomenon suggests that the time is ripe for a re-appraisal of art and the artist's role.

The route preferred by Robin and argued for in his essay is that we should all re-assume our roles as artists and imagine ourselves as the artists of our own lives. This would entail a re-appreciation for everything that we do. With art, or an aesthetic appreciation, as guidance, it becomes our possibility to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The final step in Robin' argument is that if we re-appraised ourselves in this way we would become much more aware of our contact and connection with our wider context, the world around us. In particular it is Robin's contention that the widespread adoption of art as a guiding force would cause us to value our natural inheritance above material gain.

You are invited, as the Dialectic Thou to this Section suggested, to scan through the chapter to notice the flow of the argument and the way it is expressed as this section is more concerned with How Robin expresses his Knowing than its content. Some of the content is naturally duplicated from the previous section.

Robin has presented in its original form, as published in the Cranfield Case Pack, save for some minor amendments. Robin comments on the general way in which he would be inclined to revise it much more thoroughly after this time interval in a concluding reflection.

The purpose of its inclusion here, however, is to represent Robin's actual practice of writing as a teacher.

CHAPTER 9 - THE AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE

Original version March 1999

*"To walk in beauty is not an easy task.
It is like re-establishing a perpetually collapsing bridge. You must be forever
watchful, forever aware.
The bridge of serenity does not stand firm forever.
It is like a crossing made of loose planks:
you always reassemble the planks.
It is a continually creative act.
And a frustrating one too.
You would like this bridge to be firm, but it is not.
It is a ceaselessly dynamic and balancing activity.
So enjoy the balancing act.
For there is much joy in the process of maintaining the bridge, as there is in
enjoying its fruit: peace, serenity, radiance."*

(Skolimowski, 1994)

Introduction

My intention in this essay is to suggest that we have a choice about the way in which we live, the way in which we lead our lives. Indeed this is the underlying basis of the course. The particular aspect I want to focus attention on here is the extent to which we engage ourselves in the creative process which I will argue is the fundamental root of the aesthetic.

My concern is that in our present culture we have distanced ourselves from so much, including an intimate connection with nature and our own creativity. The arts have become a separate and distinct domain, an elite combination of artists, critics, impresarios, producers and so on, whose products, what we consider to be "works of art" are created for us to "consume", as just one more aspect of our materialistic society. I will end this argument with the suggestion that we should turn that phrase, "the work of art" on its head, so that work becomes a verb rather than a noun. In a way, I am suggesting that we should see the way we live our lives as a work of art.

One reason for my concern is that I see in this separation the seeds of our destruction. As we remove ourselves from intimate contact with the rest of the natural world we lose that sense of wonder which I believe is the basis of wisdom. The distinction between wisdom and knowledge is a bit like the distinction we are making in general terms between leadership and management. Wisdom includes a strong element of the not knowing, of a sense of awe at the complexities of the situation we find ourselves in and puts choice into context. In a curious way wisdom suggests that we should be both cautious and courageous in the choices we make; cautious in view of our not knowing and courageous in being prepared to admit that.

I am also arguing that in leading ourselves and others we should be conscious of the full range of human attributes. One of these is that we search for meaning and use our imagination in this search. Another is that we have, I believe, an innate creative capacity which needs to be recognised and enjoyed. As we spend so much of our lives in organisational contexts, I suggest that this creative capacity, what I will describe as the impulse to "make special", needs to be exercised if we are to be fulfilled, in everyday action.

Eric Booth, in "The Everyday Work of Art", pursues this theme. He claims that art is very close to what all of us do when we are doing our best work. He takes us back to the root, in its Indo-European origins, for art, which was a verb which meant "to put things together." It referred to something you did, not the thing you made, and it took skill.

"Skill" originally was a verb, too, and not a verb of the hands; skill was defined as a mental capacity, the ability to draw distinctions, and it developed (in Old Norse) to mean discernment.

"Aesthetic", too, was a verb in its Greek origin, meaning to perceive. The philosopher John Dewey proposed that the opposite of aesthetic is anesthetic, being devoid of sensation.

So, in Booth's formulation, "Art is putting together; skill is the invisible mental capacities that can lead to good performance; aesthetic is the action of complex understanding", just like doing our best work.

Art exists in the absorption in the tasks of putting existing things together in ways that have meaning; and, inversely, in the engagements that make personal connections to things others have made.

One of the joys of the recent Monet exhibition in London was certainly to see the finished works of art, but my abiding memory is of the obsessional working of the lily pond motif, over decades during which he aged, his eyesight deteriorated, his skill somehow became impressionistic, big daubs of paint where before there were finely drawn skeins, and the meaning of the whole project emerged in the depths of the water, the extraordinary appreciation for light and colour - the working of his art.

But everyone, in Booth's view, has the basic competencies of art, the potential for engaging in art, and the birthright to work towards its rewards no matter what their profession or education. The skills of art live in the minds and hearts of all people.

To engage in the work of art one must be able to set aside preconceptions and expectations, to not-know effectively enough to take a step toward a new understanding. The artist-in-life is courageous enough to participate and play; the everyday artist makes stuff she loves, every day, as a habit, at the job and at home.

In this essay my intention is to suggest that we have reached a particular stage in our culture when a re-awakening to this everyday form of the aesthetic is urgent.

I set out my argument in three sections.

The first section, *When Breathing and Consciousness Return*, is an historical overview of the present state of the arts in Western culture, suggesting that we have reached a point of crisis, represented in the term post-modernism which recognises where we have come from but without a sense of where we are or where we are going. I look back to the period prior to the modern in the hope that this crisis is an opportunity, one in which we can restore the arts to the role I believe they play in our human nature, which is to "make meaning."

In the second section, "Imagination is the Star in Man", I focus on that aspect of our human nature which is the imagination. I believe it is this capacity which enables us to negotiate a world which is full of complexities and paradoxes. In this way it is a fundamental quality of leadership, to be imaginative. I will suggest that imagination

itself is rooted in the sense we make of our awareness of the outer world we see and live in and our inner world of perceptions. And imagination is at the core of the artistic process.

Which brings me on to my third section, Making Special, which is about art, or the aesthetic, as a process, an activity of making rather than a sense of the object which is made. And, in particular, I will argue for making art in the everyday activity of our lives, as the basis of the way we choose to live. This is the way of beauty, as described in the Skolimowski quote; it is a balancing act.

“As Breathing and Consciousness Return”.

I start with this phrase, a chapter heading from a marvelous book by John Lane, "A Snake's Tail Full of Ants". He explains that he got the phrase from an essay written by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, quoting a passage which could act as the text for my argument in this essay:-

"As breathing returns after our swoon, as a glimmer of consciousness breaks through the unrelieved darkness, it is difficult at first to regain our clarity of vision, to pick our way among the clutter of hurdles, among the idols planted in our path."

I am going to suggest that we have been in a swoon, a state of rapture with our own, as humans, sense of immortality. As the millenium draws to a close with society polarised across the globe in its extremes of material abundance and poverty, the human project reaping a terrible toll on our fellow creatures, Art as we know it in the West seems to have come to an end.

To develop this aspect of my argument, I return to the particular title I have chosen, which is the aesthetic perspective. In doing so I am pointing to a limited period in the development of Western culture, which is called modernism, the post- eighteenth century period of Enlightenment during which art was separated out from its traditional role of revealing the divine into an entity in itself, to be set apart from its context of use (previously ceremony or entertainment) or the content that it portrayed or suggested.

As the subject of aesthetics developed over the next century and as the works of art it considered gradually assumed a non-representative quality, the notion emerged of a separate and disinterested aesthetic attitude or experience. The work of art was increasingly seen as a world-in-itself to be appreciated from a detached aesthetic standpoint. "Disinterest" implied that one could transcend the limitations of time, place and temperament, and react to the artwork of eras far removed from one's own - whether or not one understood the meaning they had had for their original makers and users. In this sense, art was universal.

Indeed it has become part of the tourist experience. I remember vividly a visit to Florence, much anticipated as a chance at last to see at first hand works of art I had long revered in books, turning into a great disappointment. I increasingly felt an intruder as I made my way round the magnificent churches to see the glories of the renaissance, accompanied, it seemed, by an ever greater crush of others I judged as irreverent in a uniform of Nike, cameras bulging along with headsets, a noise and confusion which seemed to detract as well as distract from the intentions of the makers. I retreated from the works in these debased settings up into the woods above the city for solace.

I am still struck by the paradox we live with. We are attracted to these places and objects as repositories of some wisdom or source of illumination that we know we have lost and yet we no longer know how to see them - we are used to the intervention of the camera lens and verbal explanation.

Julian Barnes captures this materialistic consumption marvelously in his book, "England, England", in which his terrifyingly realistic protagonist recognises that tourists are far happier with a cleaned up and sanitised re-creation of the revered object than the object itself, particularly if seeing it can be conveniently packaged in an efficient way - i.e. not take too much time to see. Hence he re-creates all of English heritage into a convenient space on the Isle of Wight, a Disney world version ideally suited to the high spending tourists in a hurry.

Barnes's vision is somehow the final submersion of the special quality we might seek in art to the materialistic culture, a further twist of the de-mystification process that elevated art works themselves at an earlier stage from their context. Terry Eagleton in "The ideology of the aesthetic" captures how this aspect of art arose alongside and, in some way to compensate for, the commodification, rationality and secularization of life as Western society and consciousness became "modern". He sees the aesthetic as "the wan hope, in an increasingly rationalized, secularized, demythologized environment, that ultimate purpose and meaning may not be lost. It is the mode of religious transcendence of a rationalistic age It is as though the aesthetic represents some residual feeling left over from an earlier social order, where a sense of transcendental meaning and harmony and of the centrality of the human subject, were still active." (Eagleton 1990).

But as paintings became less and less like mirrors held up to nature or to society, viewers could no longer decipher or naively admire them. Critics assumed ever greater importance as mediators between the artist and the public because someone had to explain to the mystified folk what made an artwork good or bad and even what a work "meant". And so the merry, cyclical dance proceeded.

If Art had become, if not a religion then at least an ideology, critics had become the preachers. Terms such as "flatness", "purity" and "picture plane" became the verbal tokens of the transcendent meanings viewers were told they could find in the skeins and blobs and washes of paint in place of serviceable old standards of beauty of conception, nobility of subject matter, representational accuracy, or communication of valued truths.

As the "isms" proliferated and became more esoteric and outrageous, the role of the critic became not only helpful but integral to the reception of works of art. As a consequence what is said and written about a work is not only necessary to its being categorized as art, but is, perhaps, more important than the work itself. And this, quite rightly, signalled the end of art as such as expressed by the notion of post-modernism.

Post-modernism, itself, seems to express its own death wish. It clearly expresses the end of modernism but also an end to all "isms". Postmodernists eschew the very idea of overarching explanatory schemes by which facts or things can be connected or understood. They distinguish instead a plurality of discourses that belong to different "interpretive communities", (Fish 1980), each of which has its own axioms to grind. Hence any "truth" or "reality" is really only a point of view - a representation that comes to us mediated and conditioned by our language, our social institutions, the assumptions that characterize individuals as members of a nation, a race, a gender, a class, a profession, a religious body, a particular historical period. Artists, just like everybody else, do not see the world in any singularly privileged or objectively truthful way, but rather - just like everybody else - interpret it according to their individual and cultural sensibilities.

Herein, it seems to me, lies another of these ironic paradoxes. For as the postmodernist position undoubtedly serves to explode various elitisms associated especially with Western, white, male imperialism, so does it seem to exclude any possibility of meaning in the human condition. In this final twist of the spiral, or as a result of the discovery that modernist aesthetics masks chauvinistic authoritarianism, and repressive attitudes toward uneducated non-establishment, and non-Western people and toward women, post-modernist artists have set out deliberately to subvert or 'problematize' the old "high-art" standards, often by parodying them or otherwise flouting them. And although the art so produced and lauded by postmodernist critics is puzzling, if not shocking and offensive, to many people, the social problems and cultural predicaments it reflects cannot be gainsaid.

Exposure of the rigid, exclusive, and self-satisfied attitudes that often lie behind the rhetoric of modernism should, in large measure, be welcomed, for it is preparing the way for the liberation and democratization of art. But the postmodernist proclamation that there are a multiplicity of individual realities, all of which are open to an infinite number of interpretations and equally worthy of aesthetic presentation and regard, troubles me.

I find this aspect of post-modernist aesthetics inadequate: have not the postmodernists abandoned the crumbling edifice of modernist authority for an equally uninhabitable esoteric anti-structure of relativism, cynicism and nihilism? If everything is equally valuable, is anything worth doing? Is sprawling promiscuity really an improvement on narrow elitism? Is absolute relativism a more credible position than absolute authority?

At this point, to represent the culmination of this decline into the vortex of meaninglessness, I offer an artist speaking for himself of the post-modernist condition. This is Francis Bacon, described by John Lane as "the unrivalled chronicler of the 'underbelly' of our culture, the one painter with the courage to reveal the hidden shadow of our soulless condition. His aim, according to Michel Leris, a personal friend, was to strip down the world to its naked reality - to cleanse it of both its religious halo and its moral dimension. Such 'realism' . . . is rooted in the painter's clear-sighted conviction of life's irredeemable meaninglessness. As Bacon himself observed:-

"Man now recognises he is an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to 'play out the game without reason'. I think that when Velasquez was painting, even when Rembrandt was painting, they were still, whatever their attitude to life, slightly conditioned by certain types of religious possibilities, which man now, you could say, has had cancelled out from him. Man now can only attempt to beguile himself for a time, by prolonging his life, by buying a kind of immortality through the doctors. You see, painting has become, all art has become - a game by which man distracts himself. And you may say that it has always been like that, but now it is entirely a game. What is fascinating is that it's going to become much more difficult for the artist, because he must really deepen the game to be any good at all, so that he can make life a bit more exciting."

(Sylvester 1975).

I believe Bacon's vision, powerful and terrible as it is, is certainly one way of responding to our present crisis. As I discuss in the philosophical perspective, there is a certain logic in the way our knowledge of ourselves and our place in the cosmos has developed which leads, somehow inexorably, to this existential crisis. Bacon's vision is what drove Nietzsche mad. This is the post-modern drive to deconstruct.

But I think there is a different way to respond to the dilemma of the meaning of our existence. This is a matter for choice, neither is 'correct' or pre-determined. This is sometimes labelled as a post-modern re-construction perspective, a way of seeing our

present crisis as an opportunity to re-negotiate our sense of ourselves in an intimate and inter-dependent co-relation with the rest of the cosmos, not separated from it.

I believe that there are many working in the arts (and many at the forefront of science, too), reaching into this renewed world. There are artists working in painting, poetry and music who maintain that combination of attributes John Lane refers to as the 'authentic path', negotiating between scepticism and belief, distance and connection, desire and constraint. Referring to such as George Eliot, Dostoevsky, Beethoven, Shakespeare and Schubert, Lane suggests:-

"They looked into the void, entered the chaos, the obscure, incomprehensible paradox of human life and presented their meaning and their necessity, in opposition and reconciliation. They dealt with the only issues that seem to me to count - renewal, harmony, compassion - and kept alive a striving for authenticity in dark and troubled times. They facilitated the individual's attainment of what he could become. They showed the possibilities of deep personal and cultural transformation and how things might be made whole. They enlarged the scope of consciousness and revealed the shaping spirit of imagination not as an abstract concept but as a vital spirit - the continuing process of inspiration and exhalation by which we sustain and disclose our lives. And they showed how this spirit works to bring order and proportion, sanity and meaning, to lives that might otherwise be restricted by the mundane patterns of daily life. At their most illuminated the Artists of the Humanist era not only subverted the positivistic, overly rationalised models of reality which still have too tight a grip on the functioning of the contemporary imagination, but kept alive, at a time of erosive spiritual decline, a pathway - indeed for many the pathway - for the soul." (Lane 1996: p. 299)

It is to this pathway that I turn to next, the pathway for the soul which is opened up by the imagination.

"Imagination is the Star in Man".

The phrase is from Ruland the Lexicographer. I love the idea that we each carry in our brief span of life on earth a spark, perhaps a speck of cosmic dust released by the Big Bang, which it is our duty to cultivate.

Imagination contains the key, in my view, to what is special about us. We have the capacity to make meaning and to make special, we have a creative and inquisitive nature. My concern in this essay is to suggest that the two should be combined and that imagination is the source of that combination.

The very word contains the source, for the root is Ma, the first word most of us utter and related to Mother, but also to Magic and Matter and Making. Brought imaginatively together this family of words suggests something powerful and heartening; it opens up the inventive capacity to bring about compassionate transformation in the way we relate to the stuff of which the world is made. It reminds us that we are not only sufferers, but active makers, and that what we take for reality is not just simply there outside us, fixed, objective and impermeable, but is responsive to approach, porous to the imagination in a process of continuous creation through change.

What we make of the world is partly what we see - or hear, feel, smell, or taste - and partly what we bring to this sensing process, our perceptions. So much of our perception is ordered in this separate way, our minds from our body, us, as humans, as separate somehow from the rest of the cosmos, our mind as somehow a container for our consciousness. I am suggesting that the imagination is a meeting point for what we see and what we make of it. The essay overall is recognising that particular quality of meaning making which seems to be an integral part of being human.

Lindsay Clarke describes this place of conjunction as a 'mandorla' - the shape formed by the common area of two inter-connecting circles. The word derives from the Italian for almond and the shape is almond shaped. One can imagine the nut itself as a three-dimensional, corporeal inter-connection.

In his novel "Alice's Masque", Lindsay says through his shamanic weaver, Alice herself, "I see it (the mandorla) as the house of the imagination - the place where our inner world merges with the outer world to shape our experience. Isn't that where we live all the time - not just in the public world outside, or in the private world of dreams, but in the mandorla where they meet and deal with one another? It's our gateway to meaning. The problem is to keep it open so that the claims of both worlds are honoured." And a later passage, "All I'm sure of is that the wider you hold the mandorla open in the full sympathetic reach of the imagination - and no matter how fierce the strain can get sometimes - then the richer life feels in meaning."

I am interested here in the notion of opening up, of extending the area of inter-connection as much as possible so that these oppositions are not left simply as that, unresolved, but can inter-mingle with one another in the space of the mandorla to create new possibilities. This active process of the imagination is superbly captured for me in a quotation Lindsay offered in a presentation on the imagination at Schumacher College, by Ted Hughes (I have no other source):-

"The real problem comes from the fact that outer and inner world are interdependent at every moment. We are simply the locus of their collision. Two worlds, with mutually contradictory laws, or laws that seem to us to be so, collide in peaceful coexistence. And whether we like it or not our life is what we

make of that collision and struggle. So what we need, evidently, is a faculty that embraces both worlds simultaneously. A large, flexible grasp, an inner vision which holds wide open, like a great theatre, the arena of contention, and which pays equal respects to both sides. Which keeps faith with the world of things and the world of spirits equally. This really is imagination." (Ted Hughes, source unknown)

I know that the phrase - 'our life is what we make of that collision and struggle' - spoke to me powerfully at the time and forms the basis of what I call Life Leadership - choosing to lead our lives well, in the fullest awareness of both outer and inner worlds.

There is a tendency, in the process of 'splitting' I alluded to earlier, to see the imagination as the obverse to the analytic, rational process we associate with the scientific method and our prevailing norm, certainly in management. Imagination is rather like intuition, in this regard. And I will pursue this line of argument for a page or two to make the distinction. But all the time I am really interested in the conjunction, the combination, the integration of these different faculties, particularly when we are faced with apparently intractable paradoxical situations. The characteristic of leadership I am arguing for is the capacity to 'hold wide open' the awareness of the situation in all its complexity, to be as fully aware as possible of oneself in the situation, and to be able to choose how to act. This choice is both resolute and yet humble, for the 'life leader' as I am describing her knows that the choice is made on imperfect knowledge and is therefore cautious as well as wise.

I also relate imagination in this description to the notion of authenticity as described in the passage I quoted earlier from John Lane, where artists 'enlarge the scope of consciousness' so that they could look 'into the void, enter the chaos, the obscure, incomprehensible paradox of human life and present their meaning and their necessity in opposition and reconciliation. Through the process of enlarging and accepting the paradox is meaning made. This seems to have been the task of artists through the ages, but perhaps particularly over the recent centuries I have been referring to as the modern era, or the age of enlightenment, when the forces of rational, literate, empirical science have sought to offer a single vision, an unmediated truth about the world that Blake so famously rebuked in *Los the Terrible*:-

"May God us keep
From single vision, and Newton's Sleep!"

It was the task of the Romantic sensibility to struggle against what they saw as the absorption of all reality into the scientific abstractions of the 'single vision', as Blake called the mechanistic world view. Richard Tarnas identifies this distinction clearly, "In

contrast to the scientist's quest for general laws defining a single objective reality, the Romantic gloried in the unbounded multiplicity of realities pressing in on his subjective awareness, and in the complex uniqueness of each object, event, and experience presented to his soul. Truth discovered in divergent perspectives was valued above the monolithic and univocal ideal of empirical science. For the Romantic, reality was symbolically resonant through and through, and was therefore fundamentally multivalent, a constantly changing complex of many-levelled meanings, even of opposites." (Tarnas 1991: p. 368)

The issue for the Romantics was not just to maintain a particular way of knowing, to keep the imagination alive at a time when the rational, scientific process was seen to offer huge gains in our understanding of the world as well as the ability to exploit technological advances to control and dominate nature. It was also a concern about just that impulse, to control and dominate, which seemed to go along with the inquisitive drive for understanding. Underlying this discussion of the imaginative process is a moral or ethical dimension - a sense of humankind's place and purpose in the world.

I turn to one of the great Romantic poets to express both this appreciation for nature and its implication for morality. This is a section taken from William Wordsworth's poem "Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798":-

"For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all the mighty world
 Of eye, and ear, - both what they half create,

And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
 In nature and the language of the sense
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being."

I just love the combination of sensate perception and imagination captured in the phrase 'Of eye and ear, - both what they half create,/And what perceive;' and the idea that what lies behind or below this perception is 'A motion and a spirit that impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/And rolls through all things.' I read into this something of the same quality that Goethe was trying to capture as he immersed himself into the nature of things, especially in his case, colour and the morphology of plants - that there is some essence being expressed through nature that is the task of the artist to capture if not comprehend and offer up in their making. This notion will feature again in the science perspective in considering Goethe's work as a scientist and the peculiar issue we are faced with presently in considering the complex nature of the cosmos and its relatively brief history.

But, in particular, it is to Wordsworth's ending sentiment in this piece that I want to draw attention - 'In nature and the language of the sense/The anchor of my purest thoughts the nurse,/The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/of all my moral being.'

Here we have a direct appeal to nature and our senses as a source of wisdom to guide our morality. If we can enlarge the mandorla of consciousness to take in the fullest appreciation or awareness of the world we depend on and the nature of our own being, through our senses, then we will be guided in our choice of action - our leadership.

I am making a plea for restoring two aspects of this appreciation for our faculty of imagination - that how we choose to think affects, deeply, what we think - that if we open ourselves up to the multiple, often paradoxical possibilities contained in the mandorla, the theatre of contention, then we are put in touch with an intelligible source of wisdom and morality that can guide us well.

Artists have maintained this capacity, but I want to go on to suggest, in the final section of this essay, that we all have the capacity for aesthetic making - making things special - and in the process being infused with wonder. Gregory Bateson makes the first point clear, the need to think differently, "the whole of our thinking about what we are and other people are has got to be restructured - - it is the attempt to separate intellect from emotion that is monstrous - - and equally monstrous, and dangerous, to attempt to separate the external mind from the internal. Or to separate mind from body. But there are bridges between the one sort of thought and the other and it seems to me the artists and poets are specifically concerned with these bridges - - Artistic skill is the combining

of many levels of mind - unconscious, conscious and external - to make a statement of their combination." (Bateson, 1970)

And in that combination lies a further riddle. As we bring our emotional sensibility and intellectual thought to bear on something which has caught our attention, stopped us in our tracks, there is a lively border exchange between what Philip Fisher describes as "an aesthetics of wonder and what we might call a poetics of thought." Wonder is the famous Socratic moment of knowing one's ignorance, knowing that one does not know. And the poetics of thought, if I understand Fisher's point properly, leads us into "that moment when the puzzling snaps into sharp focus and is grasped with pleasure", which is a moment of intelligibility. So we both "know" and "don't know" in the same moment - we appreciate something familiar, within our intelligible realm, but also some mystery beyond that.

This is the path of beauty, seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary, the mystery beyond. As Plotinus says, "we do not habitually examine or in any way question ordinary things, but we set to doubting when confronted with any display of powers which are out of the ordinary and encounter the extraordinary with astonishment, though we should be astonished at these ordinary things too if we were unfamiliar with them and someone presented a detailed account of them and explained their power".

Plotinus is saying that we take ordinary things for granted, and that they are "ordinary" precisely because we do not examine them carefully enough in detail which does not allow the power of their aesthetic smile to appear. The artist, of course, does indeed reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary. That is the job - not to distinguish and separate the ordinary and the extraordinary, but to view the ordinary with the extraordinary eye of divine enhancement. For, as Plotinus goes on to say, "we must admit, then, that each particular thing has an unreasoned power - her share of soul."

I want to turn to the making something special, the aesthetic process, the ensouling of the ordinary, as a gift that we all share and can participate in this age beyond the end of art. We all have the artist's job.

Making Special

Bertrand Russell said: "There's an artist in each one of us. Let him loose to spread joy." (quoted in Lane 1996: p 269).

We have the capacity to wonder at the continuing marvels of life on this complex planet and in wonder is the root to salvation. I suggest that it is in salvaging art from its elite cocoon and restoring it to all of us as our rightful creative inheritance lies the possibility of a re-awakening to wonder and mystery, the ingredients of a compassionate connection with our world.

The connection, I often think, is through our hands. So much is made for us, we hardly have to use our hands anymore, indeed so much is made for us without the intervention of human hands at all. It is a commonplace to suggest that in our material abundance lies our spiritual poverty - but that does not mean it is not true.

I was fascinated to read of Kathleen Raine, one of our great poets of this century and the supreme scholar of Blake, following the hippy trail to India at well over seventy years of age. Early on she met the Indian novelist and philosopher Raja Rao who said, as they sat amongst the parrots from the Lodhi gardens, that India is not a place or a nationality but a state of being: it is within the reach of all who can attain it. Kathleen Raine records her response to what she saw as an invitation. "I did not need him to say (what nevertheless he seemed to imply) that India is the goal, the term, of the human journey of the soul. We reach, if we travel far enough, India; to find, indeed, that India is universal. In the West we have lost our Orient; we are dis-oriented. India no doubt is becoming ever more westernized, but not yet has consumerism completely prevailed over that renunciatory austerity of the Indian religious ideal, nor the universal sense that 'everything that lives is holy'" (Raine 1990: p. 4)

There are moments when I am in the garden, my hands covered in soil, my ears attuned to the birds song and the breeze sighing through the trees, that I feel I attain India; that life is revealed as marvelously complex and tenuous, this slim shoot I plant will grow as a combination of elements combine, into a fine, sturdy stem - and this sturdiness is a tribute to life's robustness as well.

But so much of our experience is at second or third hand, distanced and transfigured by the medium of TV especially, life exposed through the magic screen, however extraordinary, lacks some essence of credibility, the sensation of being real, I suppose.

I remember Helena Nordberg Hodge relating the story of taking a visitor from Laddakh around the city of London. He gazed into window upon window of folk attending to their video screens and asked the simple question, 'so who does the work?'. As the tour continued they came to the Gym at the Barbican centre, folk here visible at running on treadmills, 'so, what are they doing?', was his question. 'Well', said Helena, 'they're working out'. It kind of says it all for our culture that work is a leisure activity. Making is done by others and all we have to do is consume, more and more, in the absence of the world making any other kind of sense.

To illustrate my point I turn to another poet, the American Robert Frost. The poem I have chosen is "Mowing":-

*"There was never a sound beside the wood but one,
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.
What was it whispered? I knew not well myself;*

*Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,
 Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound -
 And that was why it whispered and did not speak.
 It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,
 Or easy gold at the hand of fey or elf:
 Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak
 To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,
 Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
 (Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.
 The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.
 My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make."*

(Frost 1979: p. 14)

Jay Parini, in his biography of Frost, notes that Frost is one of the few poets in the language to make good poems out of real work. But this work is endlessly compromised by the poet's inner voice, which keeps wanting to create meaning out of what is inherently meaningless: the rhythmical sway of the scythe as it mows down the high grass. The poem is as much as anything about the impulse to impose meaning, this peculiar urge to talk about "fay or elf", when there is really nothing so fantastic at hand. Frost commented on this line years later, at Bread Loaf, saying that "poetry is not getting up fanciful things."

In the same talk, he said that "a definition of poetry" was to be found in the line "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." An interpretation of this line might be that the imagination of the actual is superior to "made up things".

Parini goes on to refer to Emerson, a profound influence on Frost, for an interpretation of the last two lines of the poem. In "Nature" (1836), Emerson wrote:-

"Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth."

I take the meaning of 'hieroglyphic solution' as somehow symbolic or emblematic - but the point is that we live our solutions first, before trying to make sense of them. My argument is about our living lives at one or several removes, at a distance from life, its source, everything is mediated either in physical terms - just think of how everything is 'packaged'.

One must inhabit the factuality of life, Emerson is saying, embrace it, then slowly come to understand its ideality, its loftier "truth". "Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak/to the earnest love that laid the swathe in rows", says Frost in the poem. The imagination of reality is the essential poetic act.

This is the artistic act, the process we call aesthetic. "I think that the very nature of art is affirmative," says Barbara Hepworth in a passage quoted in the journal *Green Spirit*, "and in being so reflects the laws, and the evolution of the universe - both in the power and rhythm of growth and structure as well as the infinitude of ideas which reveal themselves when one is in accord with the cosmos and the personality is free to develop".

My argument thus far has been to shine the artistic light on to the ordinary, to infuse it with that sense of wonder which is the source of wisdom.

Krishnamurti said: "The greatest art is the art of living, greater than all things that human beings have created by mind or hand, greater than all the scriptures and their gods. It is only through this art of living that a new culture can come into being." (Krishnamurti in *Letters to the Schools*).

John Lane reminds us that the wisdom teachings of East and West may differ about the ultimate nature of the universe, but almost all of them recommend the cultivation of simplicity as an integral factor in the successful art of living. Summarising the accumulated experience of countless generations, they conclude that delusions, attachments and an undue addiction for consumerism are nothing less than distractions. An over-complicated, over-stimulated life and too much harried speed congests the day, distracts attention, dissipates energies and weakens the ability to find the space for timelessness and meditation - the contemplative, appreciative attitude of mind. As Henry David Thoreau scribbled in his journal: 'A man is rich in proportion to the things he can afford to let be.'

This is Kathleen Raine's India.

There is a passage in John Lane's book I return to from time to time to remind me of a crucial aspect of what I think of as living life well, which is 'elegant frugality':

"Without a superabundance of objects, we can begin to live more aesthetically. There is a charming Japanese maxim that says that civilization was born when the first person picked a flower and gave it to another lovingly. Aesthetics here connotes harmony, a feeling for unity, the gift of beauty. It means sensing the things of the world in their sacred particularity and being affected by the vivid ways that they present themselves. It means being receptive to their individual languages of colour and form. It means being creative in regard to everything we do. It means making an art form out of every act. It means a responsibility based on appreciation, affection and relatedness. It means embracing the

world as artists, trying somehow to become what we behold. It means being unselfconscious about all these things.

Thus aesthetics, like praise, has its beginnings in the simplest and most mundane aspects of our day-to-day lives. It is directly related to the care with which we choose the ingredients for a meal, cook it and attend to the appearance of its serving; with the mindfulness with which we purchase books and newspapers; with the attention with which we play and listen to music and the care with which we practice our most intimate acts - coring an apple, cleaning a pair of shoes, making a bed, making love upon it, wrapping a present and playing tennis. Cooking, cleaning, sewing, knitting, carpentry, arranging flowers, making repairs, telling stories, nursing, gardening, writing letters, bringing up children, singing, talking, entertaining, even shopping, can be practised with - or without - imagination, with - or without - regard for the process with which we do these things." (Lane 1996: p. 270)

This is aesthetics as the process of attending well to activity which is to imbue ourselves and our situation with appreciation and thus to create the road to beauty, to salvation, every day.

Lane recommends to us the ancient philosophy of Tea, a religion of the art of life, as taught and practised in Japan since the sixteenth century. *Chado*, the Way of Tea, commends a way of life for the individual that is still viable because it can be applied to daily experience. The principles of the discipline of the Tea can be summarised in four concepts:-

- **Wa** - harmony, the feeling of oneness with nature and people. At a tea ceremony, the host chooses utensils, flowers and a scroll to match the season. This should induce a feeling of harmony between host and guest, between guest and guest, the food served, the utensils used and the flowing rhythms of nature.
- **Kei** - respect, the sincerity of heart that liberates the feelings of an open relationship with the immediate environment. The hospitality of the host, the concern of the guests for each other and the host, and the careful handling of the utensils exemplify this respect.
- **Sei** - purity, cleanliness and orderliness, in both the physical and spiritual sense can also enable us to sense the pure and sacred essence of things, man and nature. In Zen, even the most mundane acts - washing dishes or cleaning floors - can provide the seeds of enlightenment.

- ***Jaku*** - tranquility, an aesthetic concept unique to Tea, which comes with the constant practice of the first three principles of harmony, respect and purity in everyday living. 'Sitting alone, away from the world, at one with the rhythms of nature, liberated from attachments to the material world and bodily comforts, purified and sensitive to the sacred essence of all that is around, a person making and drinking tea in contemplation approaches a sublime state of tranquility.' (Rikyu 1985)

I love the idea that taking tea is an aesthetic act and, indeed, can feel some of these principles at work in our homely ritual of pausing at tea time to come together for a pot of tea and scones for a period of reflection on the day's work. As I was once again referring to this section, I was reminded of my good intention to set out our garden shed so that the tools are neatly displayed, in places of their own, rather than just dumped on the table at the end of a gardening session. And in one of our recent gardening magazines there is an article about cleaning tools at the end of the day, taking the time, making the time, to pause, clean away the day's dirt to keep the tools in good order and to avoid contaminating new growth with old disease. My vision of the shed and its ritual is Tea, Chado - an aesthetics in which beauty is not lofty and unapproachable but humble and innocent. Awakened life is not a birthright, but something to be won along the path beyond the self.

It is with this thought I leave you with Frost's subtle and ironic poem - we have the choice:-

The Road Not Taken

***Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;***

***Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,***

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

(Frost 1979: p.91)

A Reflective Note for the purpose of my Thesis.

(I would like to include a couple of reflective observations of a piece that I published originally in 1998 and revised in 1999.

I am mainly struck by the need I seem to have displayed to 'know' in the traditional academic sense, somehow, to establish my credibility, presumably, in print. My oral presentation to the class of some 30 or so MBA students who elected for our course, which I recorded at the time, is quite different in both content and tone.

It seems that the lessons I have drawn from my oral teaching practice, as represented in the reflection to my last chapter, were not carried through into the written version of this argument. In particular I notice in the written practice my reference to other people's knowing rather than my own, and a distanced voice.

There may be some justification for this in a written piece to be published within the framework of an academic institution, but I would now prefer to search for a lighter tone.

I also note, in particular in the first argument about the end of art, many statements or claims without authorship, neither mine nor anyone else's! So, I guess I have not succeeded particularly well in what I perceive to be the academic mode.

I also doubt the opening argument to some extent. I know that at the time I was arguing in all three essays for a millennial turning point, so the notion of art, as indeed science, coming to an end of some kind was a useful framing. In contrast I continue to feel passionately about the notion of re-converting art to an active and common verb. I would prefer to dwell on this aspect with rather more material of my own.

Ah, well, we move on! And I am still pleased to have taken what seemed an extraordinary step in talking to MBA students about art – as indeed science. The impact we had, Donna and I, varied enormously over the three years we ran the course. Our first, pioneering group voted it the best elective of the year, the second more or less the worst and the third group put us back up in second position. (The Cranfield MBA offers this kind of positivist feed-back, redolent of the organisational world!)

Our reflections included the shift in our own approach, perhaps veering towards over-confidence in the second year and back to a more considered approach in the third. I am certainly inclined to think that we demonstrated a willingness to learn along with the participants in the two outer years, and were more inclined to ‘teach’ in the second, in the more traditional view of teaching. The groups and their expectations also differed markedly, the second group characterised, to some extent, as in search of an easy grade.

I was never sure of the value of these extended essays for a group who were engaged in end year exams and searching for jobs. I rather suspect that I benefited from the discipline of writing rather more than they did from the reading, although they did seem to be useful in supporting the reflective notes we requested as part of the process of assessment.

My final view is that the care with which we put the case pack together, with our introductory essays and relevant articles along with appropriate illustrations, provided a caring base for the course).

A DIALECTIC THOU - A WAY OF BEAUTY

1st draft March 2001

2nd draft February 2002

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This short piece is included as the first of two representations of Robin's aspirant practice as writer. As indicated in the Dialectic Thou to the section, the piece was published in the journal GreenSpirit in the summer edition of 2000. Robin was commissioned to write the piece following a presentation of his ideas about The Way of Beauty at a meeting of writers and 'green' activists at Schumacher College.

The article offers a contrast to the earlier chapter, The Aesthetic Perspective. The fundamental proposition is similar but in this case Robin is writing as writer, for a general audience, rather than as teacher for a group of course participants. The article is also significantly shorter and represents a significant effort by Robin to condense his argument.

One of the pleasures for Robin in being invited to write this piece was the possibility to include illustrations. The talk he had given had been accompanied by both visual images and pieces of music in much the way he has represented in his Teaching Practice.

Robin's presentational task, therefore, the main subject of these pieces in section 4, was to combine a limited portion of text with selected images, but without recourse, obviously, to music.

Robin invites you to notice two aspects in particular:-

- One is the mixture of the personal and distanced in the 'knowing.'

You will appreciate from previous reflective comments, for instance in Teaching Practice and The Aesthetic Perspective, that seeking a balance in this respect is one aspect of Robin's presentational learning, both as teacher and writer.

- The other aspect is the 'music' of the piece.

In his chapter on Story Telling Robin wrote of his interest in the spatial and temporal aspects of image and music and how he might convey these in writing. His

intention in this piece was to write at a rhythm which he feels is appropriate to his theme, somehow encouraging his reader to breathe in the words.

You will obviously judge for yourself how well Robin succeeds in these two respects. On this occasion he prefers to let the article speak for itself rather than add on a reflective comment.

The piece is included in its 'published' form.

The Way of Beauty

Robin Ladkin

"To walk in beauty is not an easy task.

*It is like re-establishing a perpetually collapsing bridge. You must
be forever*

Watchful, forever aware.

The bridge of serenity does not stand firm forever.

It is like a crossing made of loose planks.

It is a continuously creative act.

And a frustrating one too.

You would like this bridge to be firm, but it is not.

It is a ceaselessly dynamic and balancing activity.

So enjoy the balancing act.

*For there is much joy in the process of maintaining the bridge, as
there is in*

Enjoying its fruit: peace, serenity, radiance."

I believe that re-learning to walk in beauty is humanity's task if we are to survive and flourish. It seems that we will not frighten nor shock ourselves into a realisation of our dependence on the complex dynamic of relations that make up our living cosmos, but that we might love our way back into the grace of humility, to the joy of maintaining the bridge of beauty that Skolimowski offers us in the quotation above.

My suggestion is that we should recognise ourselves as the artists of our own lives, reclaiming art as verb and the aesthetic as breathing in the beauty of the world.

A Personal Illumination.

I would like you to enter a little play with me to conjure up in your imagination something akin to the journey of illumination that leads me to make these suggestions

Scene 1: You are in the Clore gallery at the Tate and notice, sitting on a bench, a middle-aged man. He is quite ordinary to look at but something in the quality of his attention stops you. You look at him and then follow his gaze, so intent is it, to the picture by Turner that has arrested him in this way. What is it, you wonder, in this particular image that communicates itself in an almost palpable way, a thread of energy between picture and man that you hardly dare break? You read the inscription "Sunrise, a Castle on a Bay: 'Solitude'." You notice the faint traces of the castle to the extreme left of the picture which is dominated by a tree at centre left and another to the right, between which is an horizon above which the hint of the sun. Nothing to obviously arrest you, maybe.

But I was held on many occasions before this image. I did not see the sun but rather the emptiness over the horizon. I saw a void beyond the place I could not

see, imagined myself walking towards and between the trees – except that I could not even imagine taking those steps for fear that I would indeed see nothing beyond, a desolation. In my solitude I sat in despair.

Scene 2: We are back, you and I, in the same gallery, maybe a year or so later. You notice me standing, this time, somewhat apart from the same wall. You look from where I am looking towards the wall and see, now, two pictures. 'Solitude' is to the left and to the right another sunrise, over water, "Sunrise, with a Boat between Headlands." The sombre tones of the first picture have now been transformed into the blues and golds of a clearly rising dawn.

So, what goes on now, you wonder, for this man as his gaze takes in first one and then the other, his quality of attention perhaps less severe than previously, but maintaining something of the same energy that induces you to stand clear, to leave his view uninterrupted, to allow the thread of communication clear access.

What you do not know is that this man has, in the interval, seen the sun rise.

I had set out one morning to witness the dawn, motivated by "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," an extraordinary account of an epiphany in Kenneth Grahame's classic, "The Wind in the Willows." And I was motivated by love.

I saw the sun rise and imagined, on this particular morning, that it did so for me. It offered me a message of hope. "I will rise each day for you and for those who choose to see me," the sun seemed to say.

An ordinary, indeed everyday, event but seen with eyes ready to see. As Plotinus pointed out "*we do not habitually examine or in any way question ordinary things, but we set to doubting when confronted with any display of powers which are out of the ordinary and encounter the extraordinary with astonishment, though we should be astonished at these ordinary things too if we were unfamiliar with them and someone presented a detailed account of them and explained their power.*"

This is the power of the artist, to make the ordinary seem extraordinary. By some miracle of coincidence I had been sent out to see the sun and returned to see, in Turner's work now mounted in this conjunction of sunrises, Hope to counter Despair.

The Power of Art.

I had been alerted to the power of art by Noel Cobb and Eva Loewe, founders of The London Convivium for Archetypal Psychology and editors of Sphinx. I still remember vividly what may have been the first of

I still remember vividly what may have been the first of their presentations I attended. The subject was Munch and Eva showed two of his pictures in a way which knocked down the walls so that I could see.

First up on the screen an image Munch re-worked many times, of his sister dying of consumption, head turned pale on the pillow, their mother bowed at her side. This is "The Sick Child", a late version of which hangs in the Tate, an image of personal grief which shaped Munch's later work and which conjures for me the last, painful gasps for air into the diseased lungs of the young girl.

The second image of Munch's that Eva illustrated was "The Scream."

It felt to me as though that last gasping for air in the domestic bedroom was somehow translated into the despairing exhalation of the figure on the bridge. Eva read to us from Munch's diary:

*"I was walking along a path with two friends.
The sun was setting.
I felt a breath of melancholy.
Suddenly the sky turned blood-red.
I stopped and leant against the railing, deathly tired,
Looking out across the flaming clouds that hung
Like blood and sword over the
Deep blue fjord and town
My friends walked on—I stood there
Trembling with anxiety
And I felt a great infinite scream pass
Through nature."*

I can still recapture the overwhelming sense of despair that flooded me as I heard Eva read these words, Munch's image of nature's dis-ease illuminated before us, the child's death from consumption translated into our earth's death.

The Bridge of Beauty.

Scene Three: Once again in the same gallery in the Clore. This time, some four years on you notice that there are three pictures arranged on the one wall. The familiar images of despair and hope are separated, or joined, by a bridge. It is Turner's image of "The Ponte d'ella Torris, Spoleto." The sun rises above it bathing the scene, the bridge itself almost a suggestion. Skolimowski's precariously balanced bridge of beauty is in place.

In those intervening years I have learned to approach art differently. I continue to appreciate the wonder of the world as represented through artists' eyes. But we seem to be at a curious moment in our culture when artists have eschewed the aesthetic, deliberately pointing up the absurdity of our culture in an anti-art.

As Noel Cobb notes in his Sphinx tribute to Eva: "One of the most misunderstood phenomena in Christianized Western culture is that of beauty. What has been so repressed and



degraded in our culture is the knowledge that beauty is an essential aspect of existence. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks recognized this in their cosmologies and honoured it. That quality, that special something, which made things lovely, was seen to be inherent to the world itself." (Sphinx 7) And at a recent meeting in Bath I heard Mathew Fox argue for the re-claiming of beauty as an attempt to mirror the beauty of the Universe as St Francis said: God is Beauty.

In this moment I see the opportunity for us to build our own bridges of beauty by re-claiming art as the act of creation.

The Art of Living

Krishnamurti said: "The greatest art is the art of living, greater than all things that human beings have created by mind or hand, greater than all the scriptures and their gods. It is only through this art of living that a new culture can come into being."

My request is simple – that we make the living of our lives an art-form, an aesthetic appreciation for cosmos. And the cosmos continues to teach us, as artists steeped in the 'perennial philosophy' continue to remind us, of our eternal connection to Earth, in its grand cosmological complexity and earth, the stuff of life.

I choose to end with a poem by Wendell Berry to accompany a little etching by Samuel Palmer, profound in its simplicity, "The Skylark."

"When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought
Of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free."

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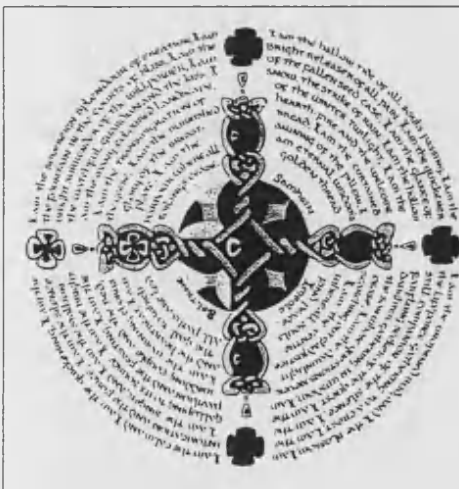
Samuel Palmer, *The Skylark*, with permission from The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Robin Ladkin works as a management consultant specialising in leadership development. He is in the final stages of writing his thesis on 'life leadership' at the University of Bath.

Robin lives with his wife, Donna, in a cottage in Devon where they delight in creating a garden, walking the moors and the cliffs and sailing along the south coast.



Back Cover: artwork by Trisha Comrie



Since exchanging her corporate lifestyle for a new direction two years ago, Trisha Comrie has been devoting much of her time to the creative arts, in particular calligraphy and stained glass mosaics. She is now beginning to amalgamate these two artistic art forms, producing stained glass mosaic pieces with calligraphed "messages".

If any readers would like a copy of the Celtic circle, please send a cheque for £8.50 (inc.p&p) to: Patricia Comrie, Blakeney House, Whitmans Green, Cuckfield, West Sussex RH17 5DB: Tel/Fax: 01444 454208; E-mail: pdemcomrie@aol.com.

Please also contact Trisha if you would like to know more about her calligraphy and stained glass mosaic work.

A DIALECTIC THOU - SEEING BLUE

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This second piece of writing Robin is including in his thesis is an extract from the novel he has been writing for some years, Ham Stone. This is intended to represent, like the article the Way of Beauty, Robin's potential practice as writer.

Ham Stone is a novel in which Robin is attempting to re-present a number of the themes which inform his thesis in fictional form.

The particular choice of passage re-produced here is intended to convey Robin's notion of 'seeing differently.' This phrase, which has figured considerably throughout his thesis, is Robin's way of suggesting a particular form of learning in which the learner shifts the basis of her/his perspective.

The philosophical basis for this idea is in the notion of 'perspectivism,' a particular aspect of the post-modern world view which Robin discusses in his Philosophical Reflection in section 3. This extract has been used, particularly by Donna Ladkin, as a text to encourage students to experience the kind of 'immersion' which Robin requests of his participants in Teaching Practice.

But Robin is keen to find a way for his writing of ideas which is congruent also with his concern for a sensible re-connection with the Earth. He included a substantial discussion of this aspect of his knowing in the chapter Story Telling in section 3, referring particularly to the work of David Abrams.

Robin hopes that you will be able to 'get into' the extract without too much concern for the surrounding context. But to introduce the three characters you will meet briefly:-

- Ralph is the 'lead' character, a middle aged ex-engineer now writing and tending goats in a farm on the west coast of Ireland.
- Sarah is his second wife with whom he bought and established the Irish farm. She is creating a remarkable garden, especially in a walled enclosure.

- The narrator is the son of the farmer who previously owned and worked this land. He is in his late teens at this stage of the novel.

The setting is a rocky area of the west coast of Ireland.

CHAPTER 11 - SEEING BLUE

'draft' version May 1998

Summer arrived the second week of June. It was suddenly there, unannounced, emerging out of the West like the obverse of a storm, quietly.

Everything had been at a standstill for weeks as cold, dry winds drove in from the North and East. The birds were hushed, plants stood their ground, buds at the ready but unprepared to venture out in such harsh conditions.

Sarah was near despair as she surveyed her spring planting programme each morning, taking a roll call as she walked round the garden, offering a little more straw here, tying back a stray shoot there, whispering all the time--"just hold on, please, just hold on, it'll be all right, the Sun will come."

Her plans for the garden had steadily grown in ambition as she gained confidence in her own intuitive ability. It was wonderful, now, to witness a steady stream of visitors arrive to consult her on plants, to take cuttings, discuss her methods of cultivation. She glowed in these discussions, maintaining a show of modesty and surprise which, in a way, were quite genuine, for she claimed no special knowledge that could be easily captured and passed on, it was "in the feel" of it really. And she continued to spend time herself quietly exploring old gardens, talking to gardeners who remembered an earlier generation of growers.

She would return home excitedly from a foray into the country, perhaps a few seeds wrapped up in a handkerchief, or a bulb or two, perhaps a cutting. She would describing some old retainer as quietly confiding in his favourite plant, or a woman at her gate delightedly digging out a few plants which were probably of the first generation to be laid down in gardens tended as such.

So she became a transmitter of a nearly lost tradition of what she described as "natural gardening"--laying out and tending plants according to some instinctive process to those who would write columns in gardening magazines, a generation brought up on rational explanation and decision making. This discourse was difficult, so often stumbling on different sets of assumptions.

But Sarah was patient, mainly, unlike Ralph, who would mutter "its all in the seaweed". Stomping off to his den, "you idiot" hopefully lost as he bent to the scent of a favourite bed of stocks now bending under the weight of their blooms. This May had

been the coldest on record, almost a test, it seemed, of Sarah's resolve. We had spent the winter months building a new watercourse down through the middle of the terraces, diverting the stream into a series of ponds that would become a central attraction.

I had joined the two of them bent over the kitchen table with plans spread out in front of them, a mixture of Ralph's careful engineering drawing setting levels and gradients and Sarah's bold flourishes suggesting the curve she wanted here, the particular sweep under a little footbridge there. And I kept my eyes open for suitable stones for where a wall was required, creating a growing pile outside the gate.

I was particularly delighted one day I was out on the big hill up behind the farm to see the end of what looked like a great slab of rock that I felt sure would make the gap where Ralph was sketching out different designs for his bridge. Sure enough, when we winched out the great piece Ralph just beamed with pleasure at the thought of this simple, natural solution. Our biggest worry, Ralph's and mine, was with the wall, for Sarah's plans brought the stream down to virtually its highest point.

This was where the original collapse had started, the point at which we had winched into place the great "heart" stone, the finding of which had somehow cemented my relationship with Ralph and his to this place.

We could not argue with her design--indeed we all agreed that this was almost certainly where the original stream of the bed had been, delivered generations ago to some purpose we could not now guess at.

We would stand either side, Ralph and me, pondering, then back to the drawing, a buttress growing each side of the stream out of Ralph's imagination.

"But it's the bed I'm concerned about," he would say, sitting down on his haunches measuring out with his hands where he expected the erosion to undermine the far wall, "There's absolutely no depth to it here, you see, it's just built from the ground up and it's so soft this ground, it'll just eat away."

Of course I will always look back at those conversations with a sharp tang of remorse. For we discussed at the time that we should really dismantle this central section of the wall, put in foundations either side of the stream's intended passage and build a proper bridge, then buttress either side. But somehow the stream seemed so small, so innocuous compared to this great slab of wall, now standing over ten feet high at this point, the product of months of our early building project, each stone bearing its memory, its scar out of the little quarry we had created.

And as I recall the chill quality of that strange month of May, with its cold winds whistling down against what was supposed to be the lee side of the wall, as the stream made its early progress down the new course we had created for it, what warning did we not heed.

Then summer suddenly arrived.

I walked back home across the cliff path, shirt tails dangling in the welcome heat, my heart racing as the sun hit the sea its constant, glancing blow of bright gold.

Sat high up on a rock outcrop, Ralph under his straw hat, an inevitable notebook on his knee, green knapsack open beside him.

I was always struck by this ability he had to make any space he occupied somehow his own. The place he had found now looked like a natural seat although I had never thought of it as such the many times I had passed it.

The rock formed a series of ledges that became his seat, a resting place for his legs tucked up, his inkpot and vacuum flask placed invitingly to his right hand, the knapsack somehow fitting into a little niche in the rocks.

By this time I was well used to his particularity. I could readily put together his pack so constant was his taste and clear his need to have things "in their proper place". Sarah would, no doubt, have prepared his flask of herb tea, first warming up the aluminium container carefully, then wrapping up a piece of her apple cake in foil before sealing it in his habitual plastic box along with a pear from last year's crop. These he would pack into his shoulder bag along with notebook, pen and ink and whatever book he was reading at the time. It was as though he packed up a little bit of his home, of his den, then took it out into a wild spot and recreated in a few moments his own sense of place wherever he ended up.

The site he had selected was a brilliant vantage point with a clear view out over the beach to the sea, the Ham Stone always beckoning the eye whatever the state of the sea and tide, a constant menacing presence.

And in a sweep of the eye he could take in the valley rising up towards the farm just out of sight around the face of the inland cliff which had become our quarry.

I remember being unsure whether to disturb him or not, for although he was not actually writing--when he was always to be avoided--he seemed somehow poised over the page of his little book, still as only he could be, not frozen still but deeply rooted still, planted. But he obviously heard me, or assumed it must be me for he did not turn

around, but quietly commanded: "Come and join me, Sean, let me see what you see, please."

These are his words. I can be exactly sure over this passage of time. "Let me see what you see, please."

As I found my own seat beside and just below him I was shocked to see that he was crying. Well, he was still, as I say, no suggestion of heaving or sobbing, but tears were steadily flowing down either side of this nose and plopping onto his notebook. He seemed either unaware or unconcerned, certainly making no effort to divert his head or mop up the mess. I could make no sense out of his expression. Was he sad or happy? I really could not tell.

But he had been writing, for now smudged by his tears there was a single line of writing across both pages in front of him. "What do you see, then, Sean?" he asked, passing me his mug of tea.

I hesitated, wondering what the right answer to this question was, for on the one hand there was so much to see, but on the other what was it, in particular, that he saw or wanted me to see?

Of course he understood my hesitation and said again, "What do you see Sean?", this time laying the stress on the "you", a gentle injunction not to be swayed by what he might or might not see.

I paused awhile longer, not worrying this time about what he might or might not mean, but taking my own time to gather in what I noticed. "I see blue", I said, eventually. "Yes--tell me about the blue", was his response.

"Well, I see the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky. I see many blues in the sea, some green blue and some grey blue and some very blue blue especially where the water breaks, set off against the very white of the white water. And I see something of the same blue in the sky where it butts up against the white of the cloud as though the cloud is breaking out over the sky as the water does the sea."

We were quiet for awhile.

"And I see the cornflower blue by your feet, blue against green."

At this he turned over his notebook to show me the pattern and colour, blue against green in one of William Morris's flourishes of inspiration. This would become book seven in the collection I put together for the library at the University of Cork so few years later. Really. Opened up in its special glass case at today's page.

"How can you describe cornflower blue?" he asked, "other than name it cornflower." Again we sat in silence for awhile. I stared at the patch of cornflowers gently bending in the breeze, trying to tease out of them the answer to his question. How to describe this particular quality of blue. For it was quite unlike the blue of the sea or the blue of the sky. Or, rather, it was unlike any of the blues I could see there. It had its own quality of blue, freshly minted, it seemed to me, out of its own habitat, and I think I said, surprising myself, "it's a blue that comes from the rock. It's a blue comprised of granite and green, a growing blue, fresh blue, deep from its rock base and fresh from its green bed."

"Marvelous," quietly spoken, hushed. I tingled. I glowed. This was not like a teacher's approval. Well, yes it was. But it was much more than this. It was a moment of fellowship, I realised, I had offered this man I almost revered an insight he clearly, at that moment, had not seen. And he said, "I had not seen that", resting a hand on my shoulder, lightly but clearly conveying something of the same connection I felt in that moment.

Then he broke the piece of apple cake in half, handing me my share, poured out more tea from the flask, then handed me the notebook, this time open at the smudged page.

Written there were the words I subsequently chose to use to name his collection of poems I was to publish posthumously, and which he used as the title of the many talks he was to become famous for:

"Seeing Differently"

After awhile he started, "how do you get people to see in that way you've just seen, that's my question. We can sit here and talk about what we see. We can talk excitedly about that pair of sparrow hawks," and he points to the two predators hovering high over the inland cliff, ready to pounce at any moment. "We can discuss how wonderful it is that they have returned. It is wonderful. I love it that they have chosen to make this valley their home. It seems very fitting. And we can talk about the effect their coming has had on the local gull population. Have you noticed there are fewer of them now, and somehow they've gone quieter. They seem to have lost some of their bombastic tone. And we can talk, as your mother and Sarah would if they were here, about this marvelous confusion of flowers just bursting out into the sun's warmth. How nature offers this wild complexity of blues and pinks and yellows against the green and grey. They would name the flowers in a way I cannot and delight in a sudden

sighting deep in the folds of some tiny plant, insisting on its own right to be here, delightful."

"You and I can talk, as we do, about the state of the tide, its coming and going, noticing the pile of logs and weed mounting up ready for our next foraging trip."

"I love the feel of the sun and the breeze on the back of my neck and will, no doubt, try to capture some essence of these feelings in words, particular words in a specially chosen sequence, attempting to convey my sensation."

"We can describe in these different ways, by naming categorising, referring to the body of knowledge, exclaiming at expectations justified or confounded. We can use language in the best creative way available to us to capture and convey mood and sensation,"

"But how do we get all these people out there to see the rockness of this cornflower? The green growingness of it, to appreciate in its very own unique beauty its ineffable quality? How can we convey its simple message of hope? How can we convey the awful possibility that another decade's worth of heavy metal diffusion into the atmosphere will dull this cornflower blue into a different blue, a despairing blue. The Blue's blue of loss, of despair. How can we magnify your wonderful perception to a world which has missed the way your feet connect to the ground, the way you carry your head in the air that surrounds it, the way your eyes see so simply what lies before them. How, how, how?"

He sat there, the tears flowing again, fingers tightly clenched around his pen, the instrument of communication he never really trusted to speak to anyone other than himself.

This, I suppose, is one possible interpretation. Another is that he was so profoundly attached to his writing that he could not bear to expose it to public view, not while he was alive, anyway.

He was increasingly prepared to speak out, to engage in discussion and debate when he could modify or refute, in the moment, what he saw as potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations. But he could not submit his written words to a scrutiny that they could not respond to.

As I look back over those privileged years, with the benefit of hindsight and my own increased awareness, I marvel at the pivotal nature of such days. What was it in the cosmic order of things that should deliver just such a day of stunning clarity after so many of unusual cold and grey. How was it that at the base of this little seat carved out

of the rock there should be a clump of cornflowers, placed there, or so it now seems, especially to catch the eye?

What is the cosmic trick of blue that it should exist in nature in such huge expanse and yet it speaks to our culture in its own peculiar alchemical way, the spirit of mercury in foam and cloud touching the deep negredo black in rock and soul.

I had no idea then, how could I, of the train of events that would somehow, inevitably, draw this man with whom I became indelibly connected that day, to my mother and her way of seeing and away from Sarah and her shifting nature.

Those of you who know my mother's work, now also on public display, will immediately recognise the significance of the cornflower, the central statement in the tapestry she started work on that June following my dazed repetition of the afternoon's conversation. and so much of her technical mastery of natural dyes, already developing by this time, received a new impetus as she started to explore the range of blues for which she is now so well appreciated.

And if you attended any one of Ralph's public engagements from that summer on you might now appreciate the particular significance of the cornflower motif he would from this time use to express the notion of "Seeing Differently".

But what you could not know nor guess at the time--or at least I certainly could not--was the subtle yet fundamental disagreement that subsequently arose between Ralph and Sarah expressed in the battle for a flowerbed.

A Brief Reflection for the purpose of my thesis.

(I return to this passage with a mixture of delight and dread. I now know, with the experience of the many revisions I have found it necessary to make in the writing of my thesis, that there is a mountain of work in the necessary revisions of the material I have written for my novel.

It is quite clear to me, for example, that I have tried to include far too many references to events which occur outside this moment in time and space. This is an aspect of a "compressed" style which I am gradually learning to notice and revise.

And I am not at all satisfied that I have yet found a way to express 'voice.' This is such a crucial aspect of my aspiration to craft a style which replicates, to some extent, an oral form of story-telling.

However I continue to be pleased with the central scene of 'seeing differently.' And there is something in the translation of my ideas about ecology, particularly bio-regionalism, into the small scale tending of her garden by Sarah, and of Ralph's rather wayward tending of his goats!

But I am also intrigued by the distinction of writing in 'fictional' form. I wrote briefly about this in the chapter Story Telling. In that case the 'story' was 'factual', at least in terms of the events described. In this case the story is clearly fictional in that the people and events are 'made up'. But the interpretations in each are open to speculation, which is the ambiguous quality of story).

A DIALECTIC THOU - ITHAKA

1st draft March 2001

2nd draft February 2002

3rd draft May 2002

Robin has had particular difficulty in finding an appropriate way to include some reference to his learning about “Leading My Life Well.” In that his inquiry is into his life and learning it does seem, to him, that he should include some reflection on the extent to which he has responded, in particular, to the ‘attentional phrases’ introduced in the opening Dialectic Thou.

These are:-

- > Elegant Frugality**
- > Compassionate Responsibility**
- > The Way of Beauty**

Robin’s solution is to include as a final chapter in What He Does a piece he first wrote in mid-1998 as a way of capturing for himself a picture of these three qualities, alive, as it were. Ithaka was written from a series of journal reflections which Robin wrote during a short holiday on the island of that name in May 1998. He noted that Ithaka combines in its particular geography and history, both factual and mythical, an interesting multi-layered symbol of how he had been ‘learning to live his life well.’ He named the piece “Ithaka a Touchstone” with the notion that this ‘live’ representation of his attentional phrases would act, for him, as a touchstone, a basis for guidance.

In offering this piece Robin recognises that it is impossible for him to make or substantiate a claim for ‘living well,’ although this notion is included in his title. Who is to be the judge of that?

Well, Robin reckons that he is to remain the judge and what is of interest, from the point of view of his thesis, is the basis upon which and the method by which he continues to make this judgement. Ithaka, the Touchstone, continues to be a source of reference for him, the basis upon which he makes his judgement. But, of course, his judgement has a dynamic quality, it changes over time.

This creates a significant tension in the process of revision. The piece, Ithaka a Touchstone, represented for Robin guidance at a particular moment in time. His response is included in the piece. Robin's response is different now and will be, again, as he continues to live his life and learn to make subsequent choices – to lead his life.

The decision Robin has reached is to leave the original piece in its April 2001 revision, more or less. Because April 2001 is little different from February 2002 so far as his process of learning is concerned. But Robin does want to comment on the present content and mood of his life choices at the 'end' of this particular period of research. He has chosen to do so in an Epilogue. As things change so has his Epilogue!

First, then, and to conclude What I Do, Ithaka a Touchstone.

Ithaka

*When you set out on the voyage to Ithaka,
pray that your journey may be long,
full of adventures, full of knowledge.
Of the Laestrygones and the Cyclopes
and of furious Poseidon, do not be afraid,
for such on your journey you shall never meet
if your thought remain lofty, if a select
emotion imbue your spirit and your body.*

*The Laestrygones and Cyclopes
and furious Poseidon you will never meet
unless you drag them with you in your soul,
unless your soul raises them up before you.*

*Pray that your journey may be long,
that many may those summer mornings be
when with what pleasure, what untold delight
you enter harbours you've not seen before;
that you stop at Phoenician market places
to procure the goodly merchandise,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
as lavish amount of voluptuous perfumes as you can;
that you venture on to many Egyptian cities
to learn and yet again learn from the sages.*

*But you must always keep Ithaka in mind.
The arrival there is your predestination.
Yet do not by any means hasten your voyage.
Let it best endure for many years,
until grown old at length you anchor at your island
rich with all you have acquired on the way.
You never hoped that Ithaka would give you riches.*

*Ithaka has given you the lovely voyage.
Without her you would not have ventured on the way.
She has nothing more to give you now.*

*Poor though you may find her, Ithaka has not deceived you.
Now that you have become so wise, so full of experience,
you will have understood the meaning of an Ithaka.*

Constantine Cavafy, 1911 (source unknown, a gift from an MBA student to Donna)

CHAPTER 12 - ITHAKA THE TOUCHSTONE

1st draft July 1998

2nd draft April 2001

3rd draft February 2002

4TH draft May 2002

Introduction.

This chapter is now intended to reflect on 'life leadership' in the sense of how I choose to lead my life. It sits alongside, as it were, my practices as teacher and writer. However, as the Dialectic Thou suggested I can hardly contemplate presenting how I live to you in writing. And as with the rest of this section I am more concerned with the process of What I Do than its Content. In this regard the chapter represents my guidance and basis for reflection rather than any kind of 'evidence' for how I have chosen to lead my life.

In my first draft I wrote that I believe that this piece is, despite its difficulty, central to my inquiry. It feels like a pivot, I said And I think what I was trying to express in that image are two aspects of the relation of my Being to my Practice:-

- One is a sense of time frame. Ithaka is presented as the penultimate chapter in the journey, through time, of my inquiry. I leave my thesis maintaining my inquiry into How to Lead My Life Well. But somehow this particular period which constitutes my research has provided me with a concentrated attention to my learning.
- the second, pivotal aspect is a continuing recognition that What I Know and What I Do are intimately impacted by Who I Am. I am more convinced than ever that my practice, as writer and teacher, works well when it is close to my Being. Each of my reflective comments on my practices has included some element of this comment.

(As ever I am exercised by this revising process. How much of the original draft do I retain? What voice am I adopting and how do I relate to you as reader? What an impossible undertaking, anyway, to represent how I choose to live my life. And how can this be of interest and value in the context of a PhD thesis, anyway? All my doubts

set in. But my purpose is clear – I want to present you with the basis by which I judge my practice of Being – my touchstone. I need to keep that in mind to guide my revision.

In practice I have retained most of the material in its 2001 revision, as suggested in the Dialectic Thou. My intention is that this chapter should represent my life practice, as I saw it, up to that time. My Epilogue will then reflect a year on, not so much to trace the specific changes in content but the way my learning continues).

An Informing Idea.

One of the aspects of my reflections, while on my way to the island of Ithaka, was an issue which had been troubling me. This was my relationship with Nature. I wrote about it in my journal at the time, referring to a piece by Wendell Berry: "The Whole Horse, which was published, I think in Resurgence." The particular thought that caught my attention was this:

"If the industrial economy is not correctable within or by its own terms, then obviously what is required for correction is a counter-vailing economic idea. And the most significant weakness of the conservation movement is its failure to produce or espouse an economic idea that could correct the economic idea of the industrialists. Somewhere near the heart of the conservation effort as we have known it is the romantic assumption that, if we have become alienated from nature, we can become unalienated by making nature the subject of contemplation or art, ignoring the fact that we live necessarily in and from nature - ignoring, in other words, all the economic issues that are involved."

I felt a mixture of guilt, excitement and despair.

The guilt was a recognition of my own romantic attachment to Nature as something 'out there', a less threatening attitude, certainly, than seeing nature as a commodity to be exploited, but nevertheless not integrated into my Being. Which is where the insights of "Second Nature," a gardening book by Michael Pollan, were rather reassuring. (Pollan, 1996)

My excitement was a recognition that the issue Berry had focused on is precisely the issue that Ralph, the main protagonist in my novel, Ham Stone, has been grappling with. He is very clear that we need an alternative set of ideas to guide our

way of living, but what are they and how do they come into force? How does mankind, if that's the right word for our western consciousness, turn away from self-destruction towards a 'sustainable' way of living?

The despair -

- well, I am with Ralph in not seeing a way forward, for it seems; it must inevitably involve those of us who have so much and want, it seems, so much more, giving up much that we have already; it means opposing the mantra of growth as the means to our salvation, to admit to the fatal error in the notion of 'sustainable development' as a possibility; to see in our global, capitalist, corporatist world the engine of our destruction; to witness the debate about our technological capability in genetic mutations in food being reduced to an advertising campaign, so utterly cynical. The despair is at the enormity of what has to change.

And yet -

- Wendell Berry seems certain of the countervailing idea of agrarianism, with which, incidentally, he grew up. I have my doubts, as it seems this also may be a romantic harking back to an age which is truly lost. However, he offers me confirmation of my project in this way: *"The agrarian mind is, at bottom, a religious mind. - - - It prefers the Creation itself to the powers and quantities to which it can be reduced. And this is a mind completely different from that which sees creatures as machines, minds as computers, soil fertility as chemistry, or agrarianism as an idea. John Haines has written that "the eternal task of the artist and the poet, the historian and the scholar - - - is to find the means to reconcile what are two separate and yet inseparable histories, Nature and Culture. To the extent that we can do this, the 'world' makes sense to us and can be lived in.""* (Berry in Resurgence)

I originally 'saw' my relationship with nature as suspect in that it was mediated through an artistic, in the sense of art as object, lens. I now 'see' myself aligned in nature, inextricably bound, mediated through my acting artistically – living life as art. (My essay The Aesthetic Perspective developed this particular notion.)

Of course 'seeing' and 'being' are not necessarily the same thing. I make no claim for a full conversion. But in the same way that I continue to reflect and develop my teaching practice, I maintain a reflexive 'arc of attention' on my relationship with nature and attempt to live the reconciliation of nature and culture.

And I am reminded by my Ithakan touchstone, in a statement copied from my journal:-

“In Ithaka I see the resolution, in the hard won produce of the land, in the careful conservation of precious water, in the pace of life in community, in conversation, in the extraordinary and yet ordinary expressions of the orthodox faith, the beauty of form of the fishing boats, at one with the water, flowing, as the music of the goats' bells accompanies the scent of roses and honeysuckle from lovingly tended gardens and the sun dips turning the sea a cobalt blue unique to the Ionian of Homer's Odyssey.

My nervous excitement is precisely that I might have understood the meaning of an Ithaka - that I might have seen, figuratively, yes, but also in the hard rock and the blue sea, in the way of life of these ancient and modern people, the resolution of quality and quantity which is, indeed, sustainable - an elegant frugality, a delightful sufficiency - an Agrarian possibility.”

I am reminded that the stone of Ithaka is hard rock. There is a quality to my life choices so far which remains distanced, mediated still. I have a hankering for digging in the dirt, for relating more closely with nature in my search for living lightly with the land. I suppose I worry about my way of life being rather soft by comparison!

Ithaka - my touchstone for the aesthetic life.

One of the key qualities of the Ithaka that I have re-constructed in my imagination is its frugal beauty. The beauty seems, on the one hand, hard won, scratched out of dry rock. On the other it is simple, a beauty which is formed out of the land and the life of its people over generations. My journal reflects:-

“Ithaka is a jewel set in the Ionian sea, a dark rock raised up out of the blue water, ridge backed, riding beside the larger mass of Cephalonia. Ithaka is human sized. You can walk from one side to the other in a day, easily, rather longer from end to end. If you stand high up on one of the several peaks, you can take in most of the land with a sweep of the eye and sense as well as see the ground slipping down towards the sea, each bay host to its own fishing village.

The people here have made that journey, down to the sea, for many generations, to harvest the clear blue for sustenance. Avoiding the marauders and pirates, they will have climbed back up into their hillside villages, protected by steep rock and harsh shrub. Up here, alongside cottages which will have seen generations through and the central church, decorated in celebration, they have carved out of the rock slopes precarious terraces for their olive trees, precious harvest, and oranges and lemons. Lower down, now, as safety apparently prevails, where the earth is deeper and easier to turn, they grow vegetables - the stuff of ratatouille ready in the ground, thyme and basil scenting the air as it will the pot.

Bells everywhere, the chime of churches calling the time and the faithful; cascades of sound morning and evening as the herds of goats and sheep announce their paths to and from their grazing ground.

The air, of course, attests to the incursions of modern man and his infernal machines. But these, too, are to human scale, roads roughly carved out of the hillsides, desperately clinging to tight curves up and down, slow curves from which one's gaze might quickly take in another view of the sea far below before attending to the next turn, this time into the land, the dark green attention of cypress alongside the softer shade of the olive climbing the hill, too.

Ithaka is home, the place to return to at the end of one's journey, as many Ithakans now do. The population is counted at Easter and Christmas when families are re-united in properties which have been home to many former generations. There are, maybe 2000 souls here at Christmas, now, maybe more at Easter. Everyone knows each other on Ithaka, the community is close coupled. We meet Georgi, then his mother, he tending to our boat, she attending to our groceries. Then Georgi's brother comes by in his truck and his sister is in the store the next afternoon. In the morning we see Georgi in Kioni, in the afternoon he is coming out of the Bank in Vathi - and everyone else is meeting everyone else in the same dance.

Ithaka is ancient, the centre of Homer's Odyssey. It declares it has been here for ever and is determined, in its rough hewn way, to stay. Ithaka makes no demands on anyone else. The French have been here, the Italians, the Turks. The Germans invaded in the 1st war and committed terrible atrocities in the neighbouring island of Cephalonia, so movingly portrayed in "Captain Corellis

Violin" (deBernier 1995). An earthquake pretty much flattened the place in the 1950s, precipitating another exodus, but the people remaining, like the land they tend for a decent living, are indomitable, craggy, tanned and fit from real work, attentive serious and smiling, charmingly welcoming and keen to hear that you love their place, too.

Self-contained, self-sufficient, sustainable, suffering gradually the ravages of our twentieth century madneses as endless ferries transport invading hordes in the short summer months sucking at the water so carefully conserved from the winter rains. The locals still obey the natural rules about when to leave the fish alone to spawn, tending their nets and ancient diesel engines instead. But elsewhere modern pirates rape the sea, even resorting to gunpowder so heedless are they of tomorrow as well as of today.

And probably even more destructively, in the long run, television images beam in of an easier life, a greedier life, apparently glamorous in Nike shoes under the MacDonalds counter, and the young people leave. The bent backs tending the gardens and pastures and terraces are old backs. The fingers still setting out the nets, mending and folding, are old fingers. The young who stay find easier pickings, like Georgi, serving the incoming tourists.

So all is not well on Ithaka. The life that has survived here, for generations, is a hard life, lived off the land and the sea and in contemplation of the divine. But it is a life that we, and many like us, come to see when we want to relax, when we want to take time out from our busyness. At some level, I am convinced, we come to Ithaka because it is a touchstone, an exemplar of a quality of life we have lost and would love to regain."

As I returned to these remembered images, writing in April 2001, in Devon, I was saddened to be witnessing another turn of the screw of corporatism, of size and power, of global complexity. The farms around my home lanes were buttressed off by straw moats in an attempt to keep a virulent disease at bay. This was the immediate threat. The following threat would be the systemic response of politicians and civil servants in the grip of business - agri-business and food business. The small farms which are a critical feature of Devon's sense of timelessness will be amalgamated, if the predictions are correct, and our local population will bend and age as that of Ithaka has.

I weep and rail. But the point of this chapter is what do I do? How am I living in a way which is resonant with my concerns?

My argument throughout this 'first person living inquiry' has been consistently to distinguish between the action I take as a responsible and compassionate person, taking responsibility for myself, as compared with action I take to influence others. I think both as a matter of practical learning and as a matter of principle, I see 'leading well' as fundamentally about leading my life well. I may influence others in many encounters which would include my professional practice. But if I do not lead my own life well I have no basis on which to presume to influence others, nor would it be right to do so.

During a supervision group, in 1998, at which I presented my first draft of this chapter, Judi raised the question "how is an artist useful in society? It may seem a 'selfish' or indulgent path, but somehow an artist does enhance the whole, even if I'm not influenced by it."

There is another bridge at work here – an artistic bridge.

In the same remarkable way that a re-hanging at the Clore gallery led me to see the relation between the two images I name as Despair and Hope, so have they again, in the revised hanging at the end of 2000, introduced a third painting, an image of a bridge linking the two along one wall.

This bridge, appearing towards the end of my allotted time for research, is a bridge which links my persuasion to live my life as artist and to practice my art, the art of writing. But it is also to teach, if I am asked.

My choice to return home to the town of Kingsbridge has certainly facilitated living in a way which gets as close as I presently can towards my ideal of frugal elegance. At the time of writing the original chapter (nearly four years ago, now!) Donna and I, were asked to complete a market survey questionnaire, clearly aimed at assessing how best we could be reached by marketing media. I noted, with some satisfaction, a certain grumpy tone emerging from my reflection! Another journal note:-

“There were a series of questions relating to media - how can the advertisers best get to me? We have no television, read the daily newspapers only on an occasional basis, hardly ever read the local paper and watch films at the Dartington theatre which would certainly not show advertisements. I am still subjected to junk mail, which gets binned, and posters.

I do not avoid these media to avoid advertising, although it is a wonderful relief, but find them all unsatisfying. When I read the Sunday papers, which I still tend to do, I end up feeling disturbed by the selection of 'news', a mixture of the depressingly awful and the depressingly trivial. There is also something about the length of articles which offers a glimpse into a topic without really getting to it, a bit like my experience of eating our local version of chinese food, tasty at first but ultimately unsatisfying. I used to find the same with TV programmes, tantalisingly interesting but somehow vacuous. I suppose this is the 'soundbite' world we inhabit.

In Ithaca there are newspapers and, I suppose, television. There are certainly posters and those tell tale pylons beaming in images of the rest of the world. But in the taverna at lunch we see a collection of the village men discoursing on the state of their world, politics a matter for serious and passionate debate. As we wait for our little ferry we watch a melee of generations, the young men propping up their motorbikes, talking, talking, alongside an old woman we have particularly noticed, moving amongst the folk, now sat on a bench, the centre of some discussion, alive to the community about her. This is communal conversation, the weaving of local life, taking time, out in the open, an ad hoc, unplanned series of encounters.

We experience something of the same quality as we shop up and down the high street in Kingsbridge. In each shop we are greeted, by name, as we greet the people who own and run their own businesses. We hear of local events, make arrangements for meals together, laugh a lot. When the researcher asked about my regular supermarket shopping I was pleased to be able to say that we have hardly entered such a place for the last two years. What a way to treat food!, the stuff of life, pre-packaged, chilled, displayed under fluorescent lights in ghastly cabinets, much of it flown from all over the world to meet the dictates of cooking which has lost sight of season and place. Indeed, the huge opportunities now seen in the food production and retailing business are to do the cooking as well, so food is pre-cooked as well as packaged.

I love local potatoes and root vegetables, spring greens in the spring, kale and purple sprouting broccoli deliciously sweet from the organic farm fifteen miles away. When I ask Alan, of Alan's Apple, our green grocery store for

beans, he says, "not yet, you'll have to wait another couple of weeks", which is the best answer I know. I do buy peppers and aubergines, along with much fruit which has been grown far away and shipped. This is no hair shirted campaign, but the food we eat is precious as well as delicious.

Then there were a series of questions about diversification - would I buy insurance from a bank or Marks and Spencers, a telephone line from a gas company, anything from Virgin. No, no, no, I say. I go to my bank as my father and his father did, for banking. I am registered with them as someone who is not to be sent selling copy. I like building societies to remain mutual and insurance companies to take care of my insurance. I am not really used to the idea that Marks and Spencer sells food, let alone financial services, and wish that BT were still nationalised and concerned with telephone lines and hate the thought that the post might be delivered by some alternative 'contractor' working to a service level agreement.

I get into arguments with people about e-mail and the internet. It seems that I will have to capitulate to the pressures of Ashridge Consulting and install a modem and 'hook-up' to the apparent convenience of communication systems which allow things to be done even more hurriedly, expecting instant response, using language which becomes strangely terse, unrehearsed and unrefined, communication without contact.

I write this on a computer, so once again I am not practising to some absolute Luddite persuasion. I find a fax and mobile phone helpful to conducting my business. Is not, the argument goes, E-mail simply an extension of the same convenience? And, of course, it is. But I am convinced that it is an extension which will continue to cause a deterioration in the quality of our lives, as mobile phones already pollute most public spaces, including the trains especially, and the fax simply replaced mail for much communication, cutting out, I suppose, much labour in the process. So my fax and mobile, certainly, already represent steps too far.

But is this not simply the raving of an ageing crusty who can't keep up with progress and argues testily for a recent past as some golden era?

I think not. I think there are a number of historical moments we can return to for clarification and understanding of the particular way we have got to here. I think of the Renaissance, especially. I am much engaged by the

Romantics and the fin de siècle of the 19th century. I suspect there are other moments as when, for example, John of Salisbury spoke of "the life worth living" as based on self-knowledge in the sense of consciousness at a time when individualism, humanism and the notion of a civil society combined. This was in mid-twelfth century.

I refer to this particularly as I believe I have seen, in my lifetime, us taking a number of steps too far or too fast. I believe we, my generation, in the West particularly, are amongst the people who have claimed privileges as individuals which are substantially against the common interest. We have not stopped to think. We are fundamentally guilty of greed and the easy option, the apparent certainty or inevitability.

I have a number of simple rules, as an engineer, at a practical level, I try to adhere to. I like design, where form and function are combined, through craft, into an object of lasting worth and beauty. I like to be able to see how things work. I am convinced that as electronics succeeded electro-mechanical appliances, as the transistor replaced the valve, as size diminished still further with the micro-chip and we could no longer see how things worked, we lost sight of our discrimination, too, our ability to say no, or hang on a bit! Nothing should last for less than twenty-five years in my estimation. I am appalled at taking a broken telephone back for it to be replaced by a complete new device rather than being repaired. The cost of parts and labour now so far exceeds the cost of parts and primary manufacture, along with packaging and transportation. It is mad. Like the taxi drivers in Ithaca I like cars to be mechanically contrived objects, capable of long life. I am not sure whether our Toyota Corolla will ever quite match the Ithacan Mercedes replaced after a million miles, but it looks on track to me for its twenty five years, with some twelve gone, especially as we have got our mileage down to about 6000 per year.

Of course we should not have a car at all, but the point of Ithaca is that there is an intermediate place, a resting place, at least, where technology offers a beneficial possibility not too far removed from the power and strength of the human being. Somehow when a tractor grows from a domestic machine into an enormous earth mover, a bulldozer which can destroy acres of forest in a day, when aeroplanes replace ships and grow so big that airports are like small cities, when genetics start to interfere with our food, when work is seen as

manipulating vast strings of zeros on computer screens, apparently representing something valuable, when working out replaces work and is conducted in a palace dedicated to staying young - these are abominations which we can see and stop, if we choose. “

So much for my polemic, my rant. I try to live lightly. This is an aspect of living aesthetically, where form increasingly matches function as superficial and superfluous materialism is stripped away.

(This passage does feel increasingly like a rant - maybe in the way that I have learned (am learning) to hear differently I am also modifying my speech - learning to talk differently, too. The passage remains a testament to my prevailing view, even though I might be a little lighter with all this a year or two on.

But my learning is that I am lighter rather than less convinced - this is a matter of choice in terms of tone rather than content - as I hope to demonstrate in the Epilogue, which is a kind of up-dating, or companion piece to Ithaka.

And the quality of 'rant' - its vehemence - is but an outward expression, in anger, of the inner feeling of disempowerment I so often feel, despite my 'claims' to choosing a 'life well lived.' I still struggle to recognise the extent to which I have a choice).

But an aspect of the Ithakan touchstone which has grown in importance since that stage of my re-search into living well was hinted at in the Wendell Berry quote, *“the agrarian mind is, at bottom, a religious mind . . . it prefers the Creation itself to the powers and quantities to which it can be reduced.”* (ibid)

Ithaka and Creation Spirituality.

One of the most poignant places we visited on the island of Ithaka was the village of Exoghi. High up on the steep northern coast, seemingly uninhabited save for the signs of a few terraced gardens, we found our way to a little graveyard perched high above the sea.

I took some photographs, one of which is the rose by the rail which concludes this piece and Donna wrote the poem, Exoghi:

Exoghi hangs

***Easter edge of blue
cliffs plunge souls
from heaven seaward
“We’ll rise in mist,”
they call.***

Bee knows better than to buzz

***slips from buttercup to poppy ripe
stealing sunwarmed sweetnesses
from life among the graves.***

Olive trees collapse

***in crumpled silence
centuries’ untwisted time entwined
with future aeons, astonished.***

All float like prayers at Exoghi,

***death unfurls
white waves of laughter
plays tag with ghosts
who kiss Alonssus bay.***

Blood-red rose forever remembers

***Creeps cross stone chapel wall
greet spirits, rose again
tempted by the distant call
of goats bells’ purple toll.***

(with thanks to Donna Ladkin, unpublished poem)

In 2001 I wrote:- I live a life enriched by a local community united by an interest in Creation Spirituality, the spiritual movement initiated by Mathew Fox.

We attend a service on the first Sunday of each month in an ancient church perched on the edge of Dartmoor dedicated to this revised form of Christian communion. We meet and write with convivial friends.

We now celebrate the movements of the sun at each of its eight great moments of transition along with other 'pagans.'

These are the first signs of settling more deeply into this place which is home to me and my spirit. It feels, as I will be writing again in Ham Stone, that I might well have been here, especially I feel its resonance on certain places on Dartmoor, many generations ago.

This is a way of knowing. It is deeply satisfying and deeply troubling, for it makes a meaning of my life which I fear I have yet to fulfill.

In 2002 I note an easing of the ranting of 1998 and an ambivalent attitude towards the creeping complacency of 2001. I wrote an Epilogue in September 2000 which reflected a deep concern once again induced by Wendell Berry who came to give a talk at Dartington Hall. But I am through the urgency of that crisis, too.

My Bumpy Learning Wheel feels as though it has taken another, lurching, rotation aided by the overall reflection of this final revision.

(Except that this was not my 'final' revision either. My Epilogue gets re-written regularly as I continue to make choices about how I lead my life and craft my practice. But I have to stop, sometime, the process of thesis writing. So I turn to a 'final' revision of my Epilogue, introduced through an Interlude).

INTERLUDE 4 – THE GARDENER VANNIER

1st draft September 2000

2nd draft May 2002

I have alluded to my interest in gardening as a metaphor for a kind of stewardship for our earth home that I would like to practise. I referred specifically to Michael Pollan's discovery of organic gardening as a delightful insight. (Pollan 1995).

The image of Gardener Vannier sitting in the sun under his hat has established for me a kind of contemplative magic. One of the true joys of gardening, as I am learning to appreciate it, is the power of plants to grow on their own! Nature is magical and wants a limited and respectful degree of action. Sitting in the sun does both me and the garden good.

The power of Cezanne's art is life affirming. I see in this picture another artist working the alchemy of colour and light in the same way as Turner and Kahn craft form out of light.

If Kahn's self-portrait was 'apprentice alchemist' and Cecil Collins Artist a 'Grown up', then Cezanne's Gardener Vannier is an aspiration towards mastery, mastery of the art of living life well. I look forward to continuing the learning journey.

But for the purposes of my thesis I have to draw a temporary conclusion.

To accompany Vannier I have selected a piece of music which wafts across the sea in a funeral scene in Ham Stone, the novel to which I will re-turn. This is an ethereal rendition of the Sanctus composed by Berlioz from his Grande Messe des Morts. The artist is Robert Page accompanied by the Cleveland Orchestra and Chorus with Lorin Maazel conducting.

The words are simple enough:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Lord God of Hosts

Heaven and Earth

Are full of Your Glory

Hosanna in the Highest.



EPILOGUE

1st draft September 2000

2nd draft May 2002

Introduction.

There is very little of my previous Epilogue, written a year and a half ago, that I want to retain. This may be the nature of a living inquiry; it lives and moves on. I wonder what I might want to write, by way of conclusion to my thesis, in another year and a half.

I had always assumed that I would make a great change in my life sometime around now. When I was 50, or 55 maybe, I would be 'free' to choose the life I really wanted to live. I am now 55 and have the freedom I imagined, which was always essentially free from financial responsibility for my family and with ownership of our home. But, of course, freedom is a construction, a state of mind. As Van Morrison sang in the gateway between Hope and Despair, "You can change it anyway you want". Which is not to say that the 'outer' world of commitments and responsibilities is not 'real', of course, but freedom is in perspective.

Fact and Fiction.

One of my learnings, then, is the relative value of fact and fiction.

In relation to the world as I viewed it from inside my constructed perspectives, I entered my re-search phase with a propositional view about the relative values of material fact and interpretative fiction. I argued for a re-valuing of poetry, the re-naissance of the neo-platonic, Romantic tradition in the face of modern privileging of science. I could 'see' the effects of a gross materialism supported by a scientific culture on the world of corporations with which I was familiar and their effect on the degradation of our home planet. This was the basis of my original notion; to explode the Myth of Management and 'prove' that we are at an epochal moment in our human history in which we might realise our hubris and re-discover our connection to all around us.

But in the way that I chose to live my life I continued to ‘think’ that in order to ‘change’ my circumstances had to change. I was the passive, constrained, responsible actor waiting for the scene to change so that I could. I allowed myself to be dominated by the ‘facts’ of my circumstances, dimly appreciating that I had chosen them. And this mindset, essentially responsive, led me to the side of my ‘bridge’ I label Despair. And I could always relieve myself of further responsibility for choice by enjoying the notion of an essentially melancholic, Saturnine disposition. All this is ‘true’, of course, if I choose to see it that way.

So, one way in which I have ‘learned’ through my research is to apply the ‘knowing’ that I had about the world to myself, to have the outer collide with the inner in my imaginal ‘theatre of contention’.

Collision is not especially comfortable. I have related the significance of my learning to hear differently, to grow up and to assume a more compassionate responsibility towards myself and others. The learning process, especially in my first year of research, was sufficiently painful that I quite lost track of myself for a while.

Not surprising, perhaps, considering the transitional effects of my earlier life-changing decisions and the further separation I chose to effect from secure employment. These are changes to the foundations of my life, rather like the shifting of tectonic plates.

But the point of this time, so far as my research is concerned, is the significant turn that my inquiry took. It was a turn inwards to inquire into my own awareness of myself in the world rather than to prescribe for others how they should see.

For my practice I turn choose to turn away from the attempt to write ‘faction’, as represented by this thesis, to re-turn to my ‘fictional’ writing.

The ‘bumpy wheel’ of learning.

But how have I learned for myself? In a curious way I feel I have had to ‘turn’ my wheel of learning back from ‘What I Know’, at some propositional level, to Who I Am in my being.

And a significant aspect of my learning process has been through my practice in the same ‘reverse’ sequence. As I have practised as teacher I have learned to be teacher. And as I have learned to be teacher I have learned to be.

And then I have re-read and made more sense of the propositions with which I started, for now they applied to me and the world. Or rather, they applied to me and the way I saw myself inter-acting in the world, in being and doing.

I am enjoying a further moment of inspiration with the chosen image of my bumpy wheel. My propeller has to be re-adjusted so that the relation of the angles allows for better contact through the water. This is not a precise art but a matter for trial and error. I sense the same sort of adjustments taking place as I learn how to rotate my wheel and maybe make progress along the presentational axis, as teacher still and writer yet.

Presentation, Re-presentation and Re-vision.

My research method has focused on the inter-play of presentation, re-presentation and re-vision. I have valued different forms of presentation as ways of knowing differently. In the process of confirming for myself the significance of poetic ways of knowing, which broadly include images and music, I have also learned to appreciate the value of re-presenting through revision. My original dichotomy, the expressive versus the explanatory, has softened into an inclusive dialectic. Art and Science co-exist in my present worldview, which is different from consilience, as the expressive and explanatory offer different services to meaning making and understanding.

In the process of learning to re-present for another, my reader, I have learned the craft of revision. This is clearly crucial for my intended practice as writer, but in the process I have learned the value of what I have termed 'revisionary reflection'. During the process of revision, in trying to re-present an inner landscape into an outer manifestation, I have shifted my perspective. And that shift has been towards choice.

Reflecting on Action.

I have been determined in my pursuit of a life-inquiry into being rather than an action inquiry into doing. I have valued the presentational over the practical. I am beginning to learn why, I think.

Once again I have to re-consider the propositional as I have applied it to others and turn it in on myself. I know the value, as consultant and teacher of non-attachment. And I

have a view that 'we' are (the we as in culture) overly attached to action – into doing rather than contemplating.

The in-ward turn has allowed me to see the particular quality of responsibility I believe is compassionate. This is to act from within oneself.

I remain passionately committed to outcome and would wish that many others would act as I would prescribe for them. I would like my students to 'learn' what I want them to learn. But I can only take responsibility for my own actions and would wish to ensure, as best I can, that choose to act out of a compassionate awareness and with clarity about my freedom to choose.

Choosing to Live.

The choice I have learned to make is to live. The path between Hope and Despair is lit up each day by the sun's rising. I chose to 'see' that daily event as a mysterious affirmation of my connection with all around me.

Martin Buber's twofold distinction 'makes sense' to me now, at the end of this phase of my life's inquiry, in the Abrams' sense – it enlivens my senses.

"To Man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. He perceives what exists around him – simply things, and beings as things; and what happens round about him – simply events, and actions as events; things consisting of qualities, events of moments; things entered in the graph of place, events in that of time; things and events bounded by other things and events, measured by them, comparable with them: he perceives an ordered and detached world. It is to some extent a reliable world, having density and duration. Its organisation can be surveyed and brought out again and again; gone over with closed eyes, and verified with open eyes. It is always there, next to your skin, if you look on it that way, cowering in your soul, if you prefer it so. It is your object, remains it as long as you wish, and remains a total stranger, within you and without. You perceive it, take it to yourself as the 'truth,' and it lets itself be taken; but it does not give itself to you. Only concerning it may you make yourself 'understood' with others; it is ready, though attached to everyone in a different way, to be an object common to you all. But you cannot meet others in

it. You cannot hold on to life without it, its reliability sustains you; but should you die in it, your grave would be in nothingness.

Or on the other hand, man meets what exists and becomes as what is over against him, always simply a single being and each thing simply as being. What exists is opened to him in happenings, and what happens affects him as what is. Nothing is present for him except this one being, but it implicates the whole world.

Measure and comparison have disappeared; it lies with yourself how much of the immeasurable becomes reality for you. These meetings are not organised to make the world, but each is a sign of the world-order. They are not linked up with one another, but each assures you of your solidarity with the world. The world which appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it takes on continually new appearance; you cannot hold it to its word. It has no density, for everything in it penetrates everything else; no duration, for it comes even when it is not summoned, and vanishes even when it is tightly held. It cannot be surveyed, and if you wish to make it capable of survey you lose it. It comes, and comes to bring you out; if it does not reach you, meet you, then it vanishes; but it comes back in another form. It is not outside you, it stirs in the depth of you; if you say 'Soul of my soul' you have not said too much. But guard against wishing to remove it into your soul – for then you annihilate it. It is your present; only while you have it do you have the present. You can make it into an object for yourself, to experience and to use; you must continually do this – and as you do it you have no more present. Between you and it there is mutual giving: you say Thou to it and give yourself to it, it says Thou to you and gives itself to you. You cannot make yourself understood with others concerning it, you are alone with it. But it teaches you to meet others, and to hold your ground when you meet them. Through the graciousness of its comings and the solemn sadness of its goings it leads you away to the Thou in which the parallel lines of relations meet. It does not help sustain you in life, it only helps you to glimpse eternity.” (Buber 1958: pp. 49-50)

“You cannot make yourself understood with others concerning it”!

But surely I have to try, for the purposes of my thesis, to re-present my learning.

I am learning to live 'twofold', in a perpetual dancing dialectic. It is easy to label onefold as material and the other as spiritual, but that doesn't really convey the poetry that is imminent in the material world nor the gritty reality true to the spiritual.

I have to live imagining my life to be purposeful and significant while also realising my insignificance in the grand scheme of the cosmos. This was the sun's message to me – it rose for me as it rises for everything.

In giving up commitment to outcome I remain passionately hopeful. But I know that I must live and act in the present, with all my living being, rather than imagine that I can control the future.

This is poetic wisdom as I have come to know it. A passion for life in the present, full of sensuous grace and mystery, if only I choose to see, and hear, it. But if I try to 'capture it' its essence slips out of my grasp. I have known this from the beginning – but still words tumble over themselves to try and define the un-definable.

In conclusion.

So, I should end. You have no more reason to be interested in the decisions I have made. The time for autobiographical re-presentation is over. I must live my life in the way that I choose. I hope that I may meet others through my being and in my practices. As, maybe, I have met you, for a while, in these pages. I may hope that you have found some solace or inspiration here with me, but that is your affair.

It seems that for now, anyway, I will not re-turn to the land to tend my goats. They will continue to in-form my novel. But let me end with a goat, nevertheless:

Goat

***Bones. Belly. Bag.
All ridge, all sag
Lumps of torn hair
Glued here and there.***

***What else am I
With my wicked eye?***

***Though nobly born
With a lofty nose
I'm as happy with the Thorn
As I am with the Rose.***

(Ted Hughes 1995: p. 43)

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